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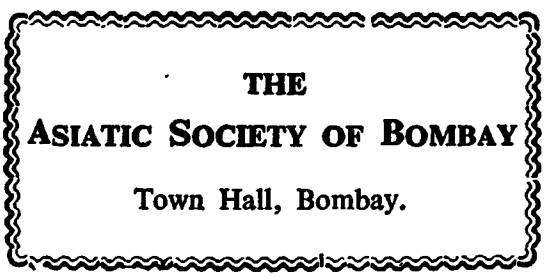

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UNKNOWN ESSEX

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

A CRUISE ACROSS EUROPE
ADVENTURES WITH A SKETCH BOOK
THE LAST CRUSADE, 1914—1918
A DWELLER IN MESOPOTAMIA
A PAINTER IN PALESTINE
UNKNOWN KENT
UNKNOWN SUSSEX
UNKNOWN SURREY

THE BODLEY HEAD

Donald Maxwell

Sketch for picture
"The Black Ship".

"IT'S DOWN BY THE LOWER HOPE, DEAR LASS,
WITH THE GUNFLEET SANDS IN VIEW:"
KIPLING

UNKNOWN ESSEX

BY DONALD MAXWELL

Being a series of unmethodical Explorations of the County illustrated in line and colour by the Author

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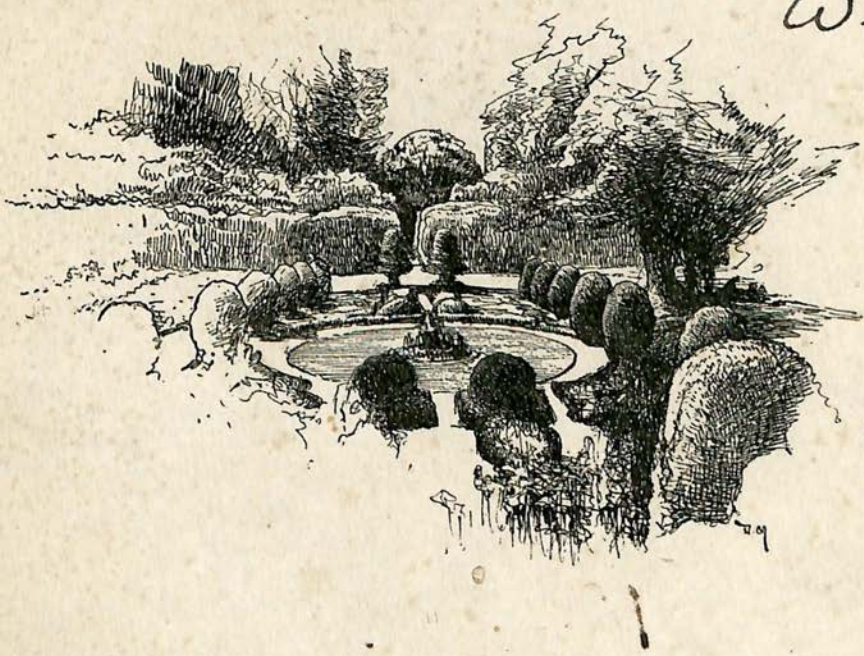

ROYAL

LONDON: JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD LIMITED

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PREFACE

THERE are few travellers who have not some pre-conceived idea of the county of Essex. All those who go down to the sea in ships, and have business in the great waters of London have at least a nodding acquaintance with "those cursed Essexian plains," and imagine that the somewhat uneventful landscape continues without change to the confines of Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Suffolk. For this reason, perhaps, Essex has been to tourists the Cinderella of the Home Counties.

But Cinderella came into her own when the glass slipper was left behind. The couriers of the Bodley Head are scouring England in quest of the "Unknown," and, without wishing to refer to any of our counties as ugly sisters, I beg to report that the shoe fits. If it is impossible to find places where man has never trodden, it is quite easy to roam in regions where tourists have never been, and some account of Cinderella's charms are herein recorded.

My thanks are due to the Editors of the *Graphic* and the

Yachting Monthly respectively, for their courtesy in allowing me to use sketches and matter that have appeared in their pages, and to Mr. Douglas Young for the kind loan of sketches from his collection for inclusion in this book.

DONALD • MAXWELL.

BORSTAL, ROCHESTER,
May 9th, 1925.

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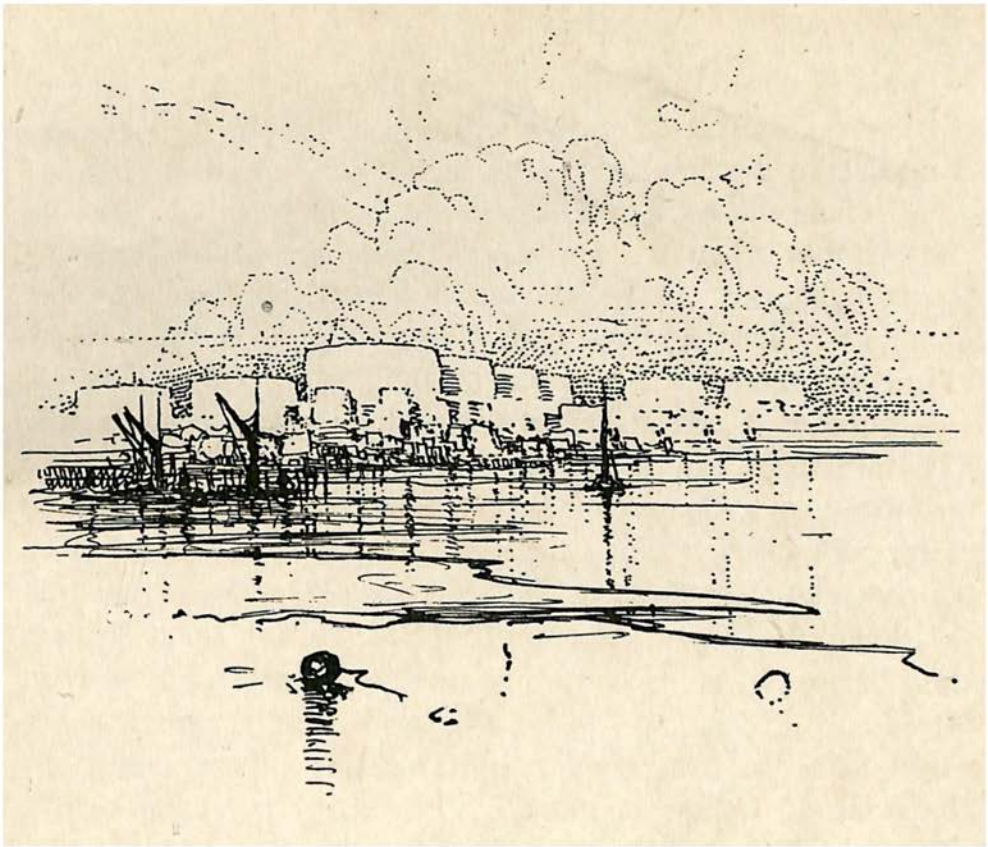
I

THE APOTHEOSIS OF MUCKING FLATS

"It was like my own marsh country, flat and monotonous, and with a dim horizon; while the winding river turned and turned, and the great floating buoys turned and turned, and everything else seemed stranded and still."

DICKENS

(In Essex. *Great Expectations*).



THE APOTHEOSIS OF MUCKING FLATS

TO men of Kent, Tilbury is the Gate of Essex. To many from India and the West it is the Gate of England. Much changed since it guarded the river-road to London, when Queen Elizabeth gave a stirring address to her troops, an address which still remains as an inscription within the fort. Much changed since Samuel Pepys was more than anxious about the Dutch coming up the Thames. Changed

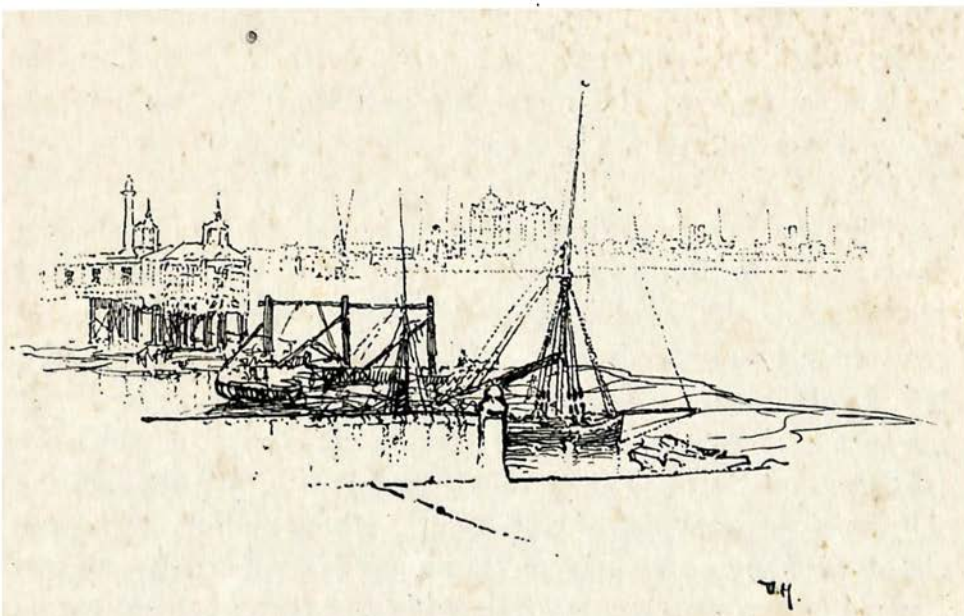
yet more when the Dutch in friendlier spirit had taught us at Canvey Island the latest wrinkles in keeping out the sea and setting boundaries to the broad waters of the Thames; and changed back yet again to something of her old importance when the new docks made her a link with the metropolis, and when, last but not least, she had to play her part, blazing away again at enemies upon the road to London—though this time in the air.

There is a scheme afoot for making a tunnel under the Thames from Gravesend to Tilbury, thus joining the roads of Kent with those of Essex without the necessity of the ferry now in use. The utility of this plan was demonstrated during the war, when a bridge of boats with an opening section was devised. It was of wood, resting upon lighters and barges. The necessity of some road connection between Kent and Essex has led to this project of a tunnel being brought forward at regular intervals, but nothing seems to be done. I believe a position higher up the river—nearer Purfleet—is now contemplated.

My knowledge of Essex being almost entirely acquired from the point of view of the sailor, that being of necessity, owing to plentiful shallows and mud, a somewhat distant knowledge, I determined to explore a little into the mysterious hinterland of these grey, flat banks. In compiling these notes, therefore, on the "unknown" to be found in Essex, I will begin with what sounds the most monotonous, the mudiest, and the most unpromising material, and so seek out Mucking.

WEEK-ENDERS OFF CANVEY ISLAND

I have an idea that it may be picturesque and charming in spite of its name. There is always hope. I am tempted to perpetrate an awful joke about being led on by high hope and contenting myself with the Lower Hope, but I will refrain. That reminds me, however, that I must find out



TILBURY, FROM GRAVESEND.

what Mucking means and also why the Lower Hope is so called.

To a Rochester man, Essex can be achieved by a bus ride to Gravesend and a ferry, and that bus ride, quite apart from its distant views of the land he is bound for, takes us by Gads Hill and Dickens's house and the village of Chalk—

and thence, whether we will or no, we are in the midst of Great Expectations.

"Ours was the marsh country, down by the river, within, as the river wound, twenty miles of the sea. . . . The dark flat wilderness beyond the churchyard (Chalk?) intersected with dykes and mounds and gates, with scattered cattle feeding on it, was the marshes; and that low leaden line beyond was the river."

I believe it is now the fashion in some quarters to show a superior air in literature by boasting a complete ignorance of Dickens. I have met people who glory in not having read even one of his works. The pose is dying out, because it is so obviously ridiculous. That Dickens was a great artist needs no advocacy, but there is a special sense in which he was an artist not so generally recognized. I have always felt very strongly the fact that Dickens might by some slight difference of early environment have been a painter. Not a painter, as many would readily imagine, of the humour, pathos, and tragedy of human life—another Hogarth; but rather an exponent of landscape, for above all things his landscape is extraordinarily pictorial.

We will take Dickens with us, therefore, as a guide from Tilbury down the river, and with *Great Expectations* as a text-book, let him find the pictures for us. The great novelist did not write much about Essex, but what he did give us is without blemish.

TILBURY FORT

You will remember, unless you are one of the superior persons who has no use for Dickens, the last scenes of the book, where Pip and his friend are on their long boat journey down the river in their tragically unsuccessful attempt to smuggle the old returned transport out of the country by means of some outgoing Continental packet which they hoped to intercept.

The atmosphere of the busy river is hit off at once :

> "Again among the tiers of shipping in and out, avoiding rusty chain-cables, frayed hempen hawsers, and bobbing buoys, sinking for the moment broken baskets, scattering floating chips of wood and shaving, cleaving floating scum of coal, in and out, under the figure-head of the *John* of Sunderland making a speech to the winds (as is done by many Johns), and the *Betsy* of Yarmouth with a firm formality of bosom and her knobby eyes starting two inches out of her head ; in and out, hammers going in shipbuilders' yards, saws going at timber, clashing engines going at things unknown, pumps going in leaky ships, capstans going, ships going out to sea, and unintelligible sea-creatures roaring curses over the bulwarks at respondent lightermen ; in and out—out at last upon the clearer river, where the ships' boys might take their fenders in, no longer fishing in troubled waters with them over the side, and where the festooned sails might fly out to the wind."

I have sought out, bit by bit, in a boat these various

pictures. Many of Dickens's descriptions of actual places are purposely mixed up, so that it is difficult to follow from a purely topographical point of view, but in this river journey there he has had no need to do so, and the story, even to the exact mileage, keeps close to the actual scenes, vividly portrayed.

After passing Gravesend on the last of the ebb the boat is evidently hugging the Essex shore, because when the tide has turned definitely against them, the rowers are trying to keep in the slack, and to do this to the best advantage as the tide begins to flow they would pass close to East Tilbury.

> "And soon the tide began to slacken, and the craft lying at anchor to swing, and presently they had all swung round, and the ships that were taking advantage of the new tide to get up to the Pool began to crowd upon us in a fleet, and we kept under the shore, as much out of the strength of the tide now as we could, standing carefully off from low shallows and mud banks."

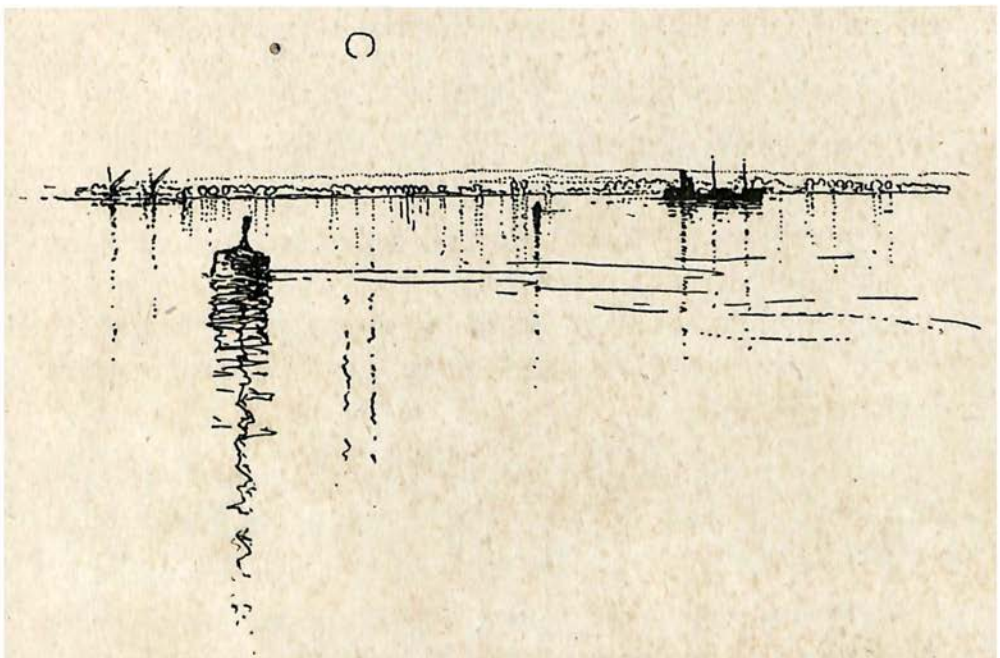
Round the bend by Coalhouse Point (if my reckoning is right), and getting near Mucking, they landed and took stock of things.

Here is a landscape gem :

> "It was like my own marsh country, flat and monotonous, and with a dim horizon; while the winding river turned and turned, and the great floating

buoys upon it turned and turned, and everything else seemed stranded and still."

The curious structure known as Mucking Light may have been rebuilt since Dickens wrote this, but if so, some



IN THE LOWER HOPE.
"FLAT AND MONOTONOUS, AND WITH A DIM HORIZON."

sort of family likeness with its predecessor must have been maintained. [Italics mine.]

"Some ballast-lighters, shaped like a child's first rude imitation of a boat, lay low in the mud; *and a little squat*

shoal-lighthouse, on open piles, stood crippled in the mud on stilts and crutches; and slimy stakes stuck out of the mud, and slimy stones stuck out of the mud, and red landmarks and tidemarks stuck out of the mud, and an old landing-stage and an old roofless building slipped into the mud, and all about us was stagnation and mud."

Along the lone shore by Thames Haven there is a glimpse of the higher land appearing dimly by Horndon-on-the-Hill.

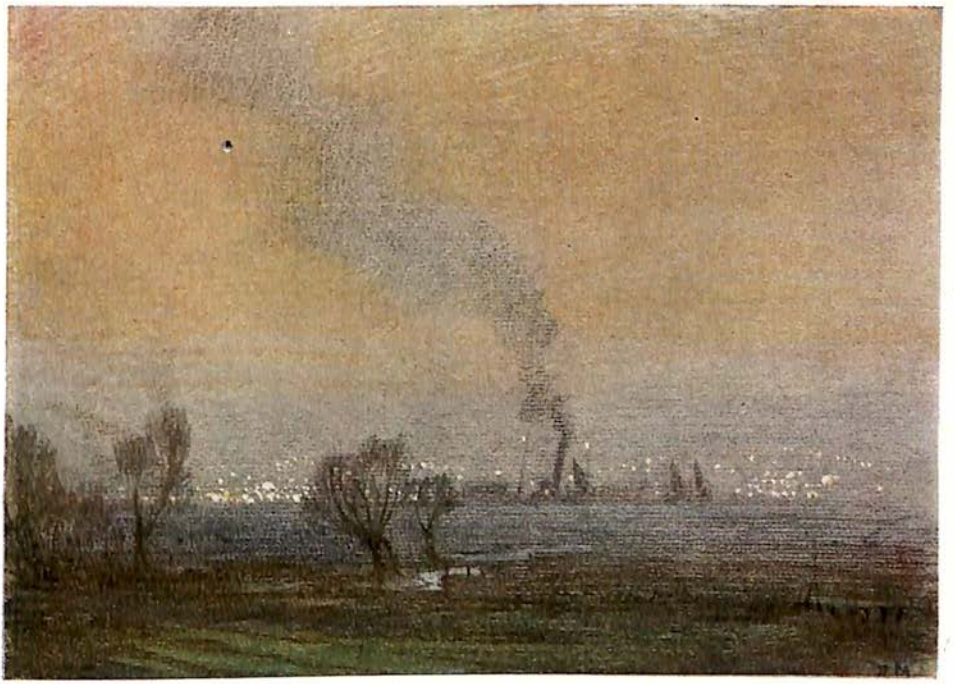
"There was the red sun, on the low level of the shore, in a purple haze, fast deepening into black; and there was the solitary flat marsh; and far away there were the rising grounds, between which and us there seemed to be no life, save here and there in the foreground a melancholy gull."

Then there is another pictorial touch, which will be appreciated by those small yacht cruisers that are belated on a bleak evening:

"It was very cold, and a collier coming by us, with her galley-fire smoking and flaring, looked like a comfortable home."

Some four or five miles from Mucking had now been covered when:

"we descried a light and a roof, and presently afterwards ran alongside a little causeway made of stones that had been picked up hard by. Leaving the rest in the

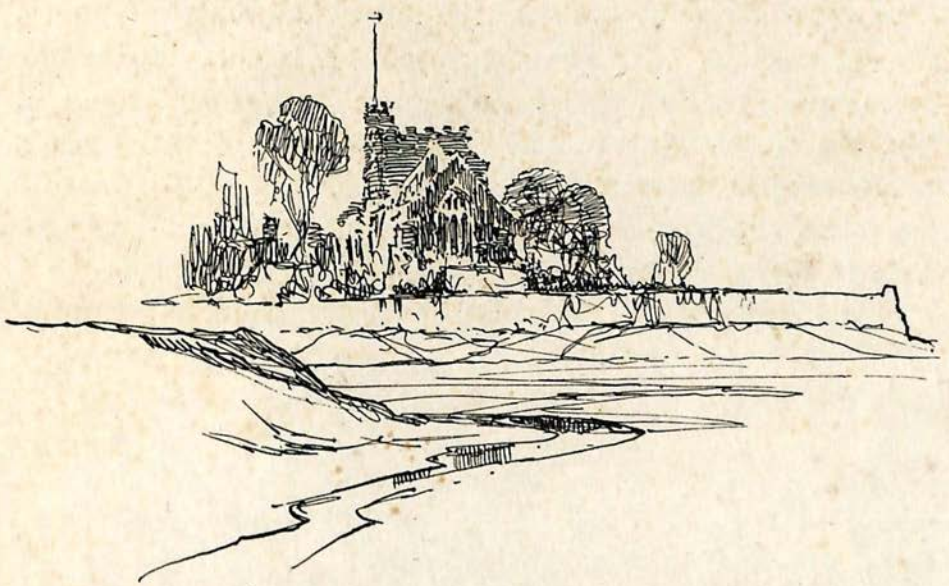


THE THAMES MARSHES

boat, I stepped ashore, and found the light to be in the window of a public house."

As there are literally no others possible, this must be our old friend The Lobster Smack at Hole Haven.

The scene of the capture of the convict, the struggle in



MUCKING CHURCH.

the boat as the Hamburg packet is almost upon them, must have been just off Deadman's Point. So we come to the end of our topographical studies in *Great Expectations* as far as Essex is concerned.

The journey from Tilbury to Stanford-le-Hope *viâ* Mucking depends upon weather conditions for the impression

it makes upon the traveller. On a dull and wet day when visibility is low the prospect is exceedingly depressing; but in sunny clear airs, especially under conditions of wind and weather that make for fine skies, there is a great charm about it. The moving barge sails and silhouettes of liners and ships appearing over the sea-wall in the distance give a certain character to the flat, green landscape. Thames Haven, with its oil reservoirs appearing in some lights like an eastern city, and the green pasture around the village of Mucking are pleasing notes. The hardening of the *h* into *k* in Mucking is unfortunate. Mucking should be Much-ing—*i.e.* much pasture—and has no reference to mud although there is plenty of it about.

The derivation of Mucking is fairly clear, but that of

MUCH PASTURE, HENCE THE NAME MUCKING.

THE SALTINGS AT MUCKING.

Stanford-le-Hope has been said to contain as much controversy as the birthplace of Homer. Stanford is simple—the stone ford or the stepping-stones across the water. Not a few rash antiquaries have imagined that this ford must have been across the Thames.

A moment's consideration of the nature of the Thames at this point will show that this is absurd. At present the river is some forty feet deep in the centre at dead low water. Allowing for all sorts of changes, dredging, etc., it could never have been fordable.

Before the present sea-walls on either side were in existence the width of the estuary must have been some seven or eight miles from shore to shore. It is just possible that there was a made causeway, like the Broom Road at Foulness, stretching from the Kent and Essex sides respectively and connected by a ferry in the middle. This would have

been, at low water, a causeway of stones, several miles long with a comparatively small section to be crossed by boat. It is conceivable that this way may have been known as the stone ford, but it seems much more likely that the ford

VIEW OF THE CLAUDIAN AQUEDUCT, FROM THE RAILWAY AT STANFORD-LE-HOPE.

refers to that over Mucking Creek, which at low water would be quite fordable by means of stepping-stones to give a firm foothold in such a muddy place. So much for the ford, *Stanford ;* but what about the *le Hope ?*

The name Hope occurs frequently in England. It is generally a valley or pasture flanked by hills. The name of the reach of the Thames between Gravesend and Sea Reach is the Lower Hope. Northfleet Hope is the name of the

MANOR FARM, STANFORD-LE-HOPE.

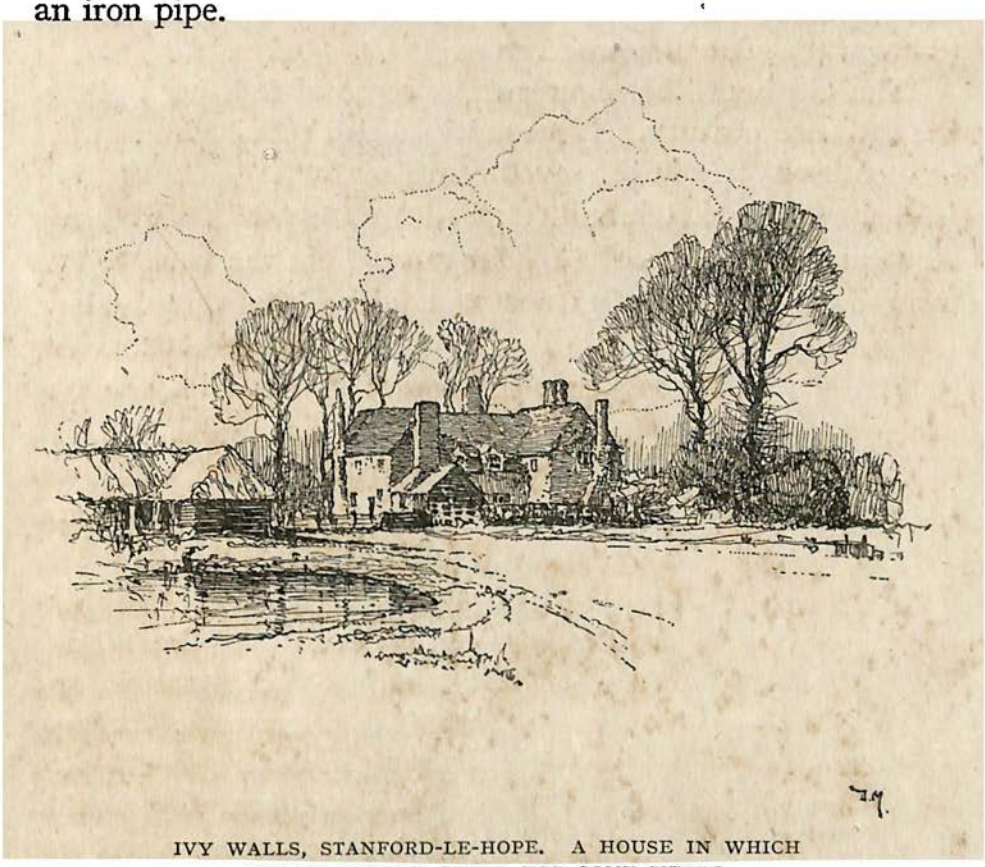
reach above Gravesend and the other end of the S-shaped loop of the river. I am no expert in place-names, but I cannot help thinking that Hoop may be the word in this case which has been turned into Hope. In that case

Stanford-le-Hope would follow naturally as the distinction of this Stanford from other Stanfords. It is the Stanford by the Hope, and Stanford-le-Hope would be a similar name to St. Mary-le-Strand. There are those, however, who see in the *le* the word *lee*—a pasture.

There is, or rather there was, for I sketched it on the eve of demolition, a house in Stanford-le-Hope known as Ivy Walls, reproduced on page 17. This place by the time this has seen the light will have been pulled down, for it had fallen into a state of decay, so serious from a builder's point of view that nothing could be done with it. Probably the ivy which gave it a name in latter days has been responsible for this downfall. The interest of this old place was to me greatly enhanced by its literary association, for it was here that Joseph Conrad lived for some years and it was here that some of that author's wonderful writing was done.

Walking from Tilbury to Muckingford, I espied the little mill of which I was in search, and started off after it across ploughed fields. Like many things in flat lands, it was further off than it appeared to be, and by the time I had got within easy sketching distance I was almost exhausted through lifting several tons of mud during my progress. The mill is unique. It has apparently been used for pumping water out of the dykes, but the remarkable feature about it is its scale. It is a windmill in miniature, and the topmost sail would be only about 25 feet from the ground. The next mystery to be explained was the Claudian Aqueduct, which I have sketched on page 14. The illusion is a curious one, and

depends upon the fact that the arches of the "aqueduct" are only some 5 feet in height, and carry not a waterway, but an iron pipe.



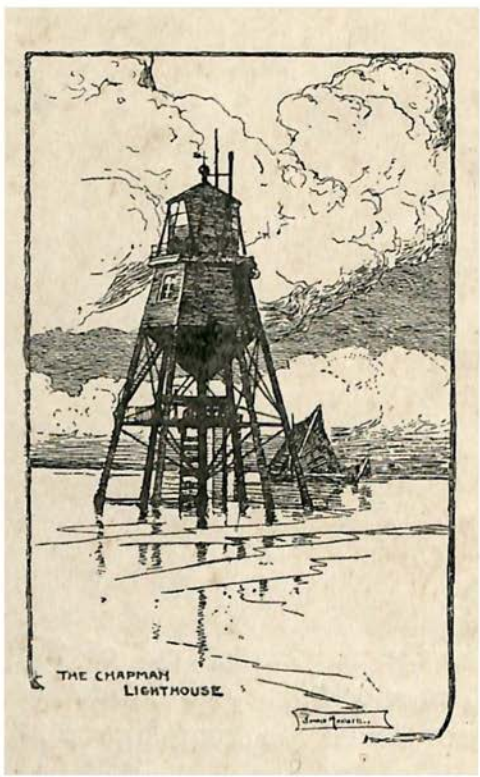
IVY WALLS, STANFORD-LE-HOPE. A HOUSE IN WHICH JOSEPH CONRAD LIVED FOR SOME YEARS.

Another picturesque spot is the neighbourhood of the old farmhouse marked in the Ordnance Survey as Cabborns, but now known as Manor Farm. From Mucking Church it

lies across the upper extremity of the creek, where the water diminishes to a stream running through pasture. At spring tides these fields are often flooded, and the farm appears to be on the edge of a broad river.

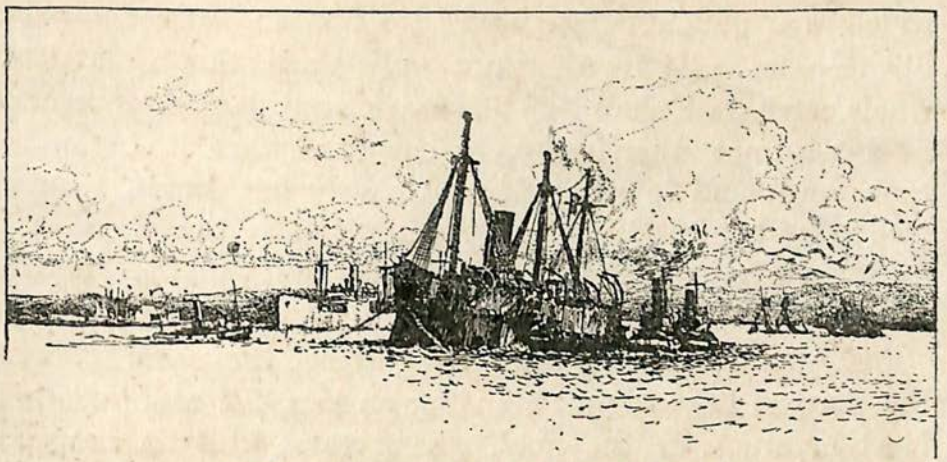
The old house has four gables, some of it being built in the fifteenth century. It was altered and rebuilt later in the sixteenth or early in the seventeenth century.

I made the sketch and retraced my steps to the Claudian Aqueduct, which is not very far away from the back of this farmhouse, and then struck out along the railway line, a single track connecting Thames Haven with the line to Tilbury.



The sun was now low, and the mists were rising. Hull-down behind the sea-wall, which I could just discern across the level land, moved sails and funnels and masts and fantastic trails of hanging smoke.

The western sky behind me was growing into red and gold, and the dim distance before me to the east was glowing in a shimmer of misty blue. And then a great wonder happened. There



THE OLD *CHAMPION* IN THE LOWER HOPE.

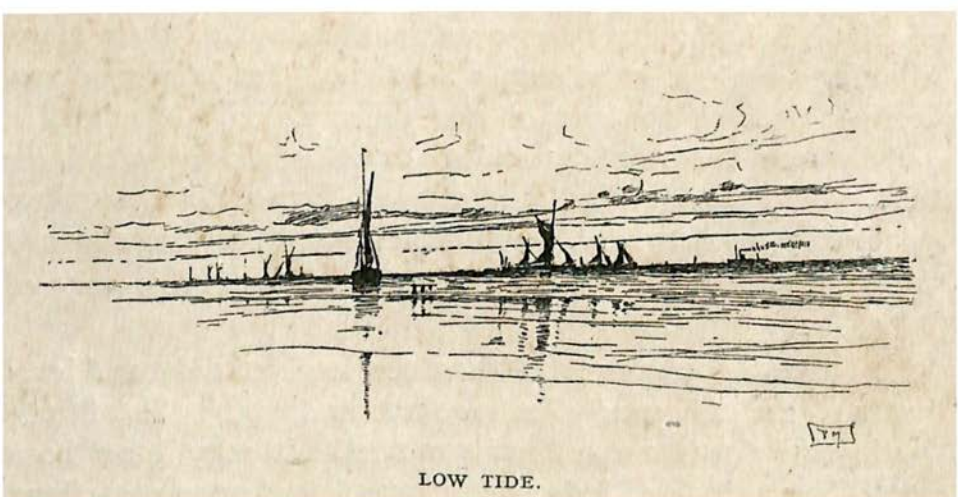
before me, out of the blueness, rose the walls of a mighty city, a vast metropolis of amber touched with gold. No sight of Babylon or Tyre, even in the days of their glory, could vie with it in solemn splendour. Yet it seemed real enough and at the end of the railway line. It might be only where the rainbow ended, or it might be a mirage that would fade. Whatever it was, I was determined to probe the mystery, and so hurried forward, picking my way from sleeper to sleeper in the direction of this city of light.

I have seen mirages, and these flat lands of dyke and level pasture are frequently mirage-haunted, but this I felt instinctively was no ordinary mirage. It may have been caused by a trick of light, but it was based upon something

which was undoubtedly there. No less an authority than Shakespeare tells us that not only these things but the whole earth itself shall fade like some unsubstantial pageant.

I was not, therefore, very surprised when it began to tone down and lower itself, and slowly but surely, as the magic light died away, resolve itself into the semblance not of a city of light but of oil tanks, and became Thames Haven.

They still made an intriguing picture, these works, with the sentinel beacon-light standing on legs like some visiting Martian stuck in the mud, giving them still an unusual character. I should like to have sketched it, but the light was gone, so I pursued my way, and after some negotiation at the entrance to the oil city, succeeded in finding some one in authority who gave me permission to wander about.



LOW TIDE.

THE LITTLE PUMPING MILL ON THE MARSHES AT MUCKINGFORD.

There is something very restful and impressive about this great expanse of water seen upon a still evening. In the first picture in this book I have endeavoured to catch the spirit of the Lower Thames in a subject I found one morning when a red sun was burning its way upwards through blue haze. One black ship was in view, outward bound, setting out upon the trail that is always new.

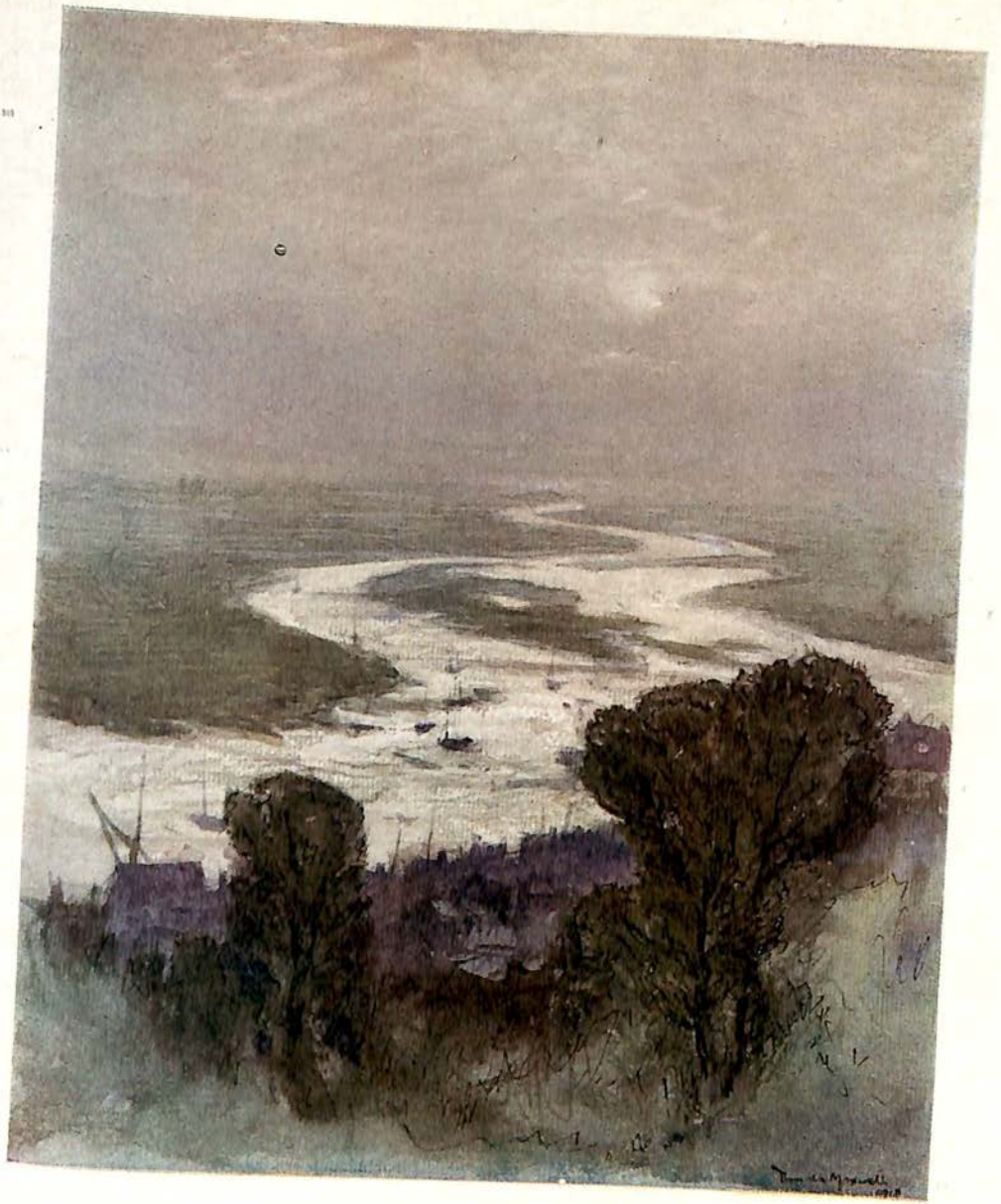
The dim distance on either hand faintly reveals the hills of Kent and of Essex, and on each shore between them and the river stretch miles of marsh-land. On the Kent side are powder works, a flat, green world dotted with buildings, cautiously set apart. A few lonely quays and a group of barges at anchor alone break the monotony of league upon league of uneventful shoal water.

Mucking Flats, during the war, became a resting-place for damaged ships. Any vessel that had been torpedoed in

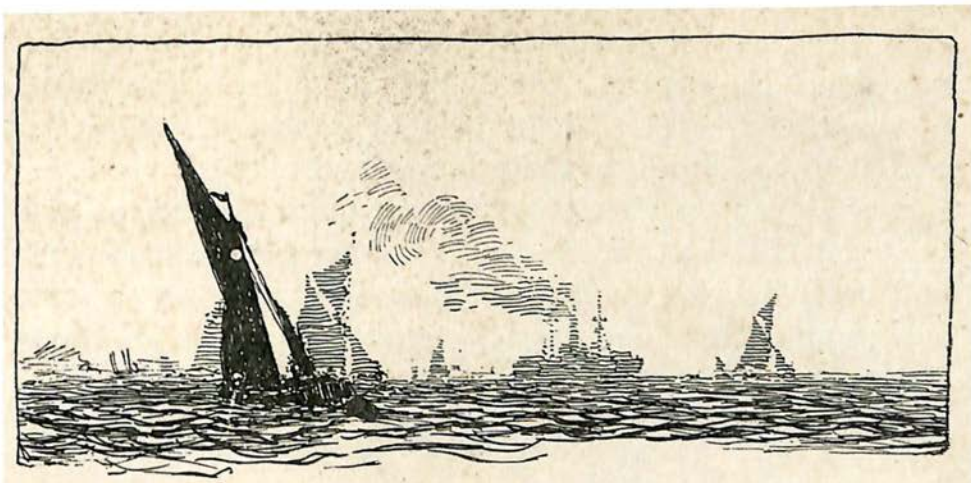
the waters adjacent to the Thames estuary, if she could be kept afloat, was towed into the river and beached here. Subsequently she might be patched up so that she could proceed into dry dock. Often, however, she was left derelict and red with rust. In one case I remember a Dutch ship was cut in two and the two halves of her towed to Mucking. On another occasion a ship loaded with cotton was torpedoed and this explosion set her on fire. The survivors of her ship's company were taken off and she was towed at night up to this mud bank, red hot and flaming high like a pillar of fire, a fearful and lurid portent.

My patrol during 1917 took me often to make reports concerning the condition of ships in this strange semi-submerged fleet, but I was sent out to Mesopotamia in 1918 and I do not know what happened to these ships. Rumour says the Dutch two "halves" were joined together, but I have never come across any one who can tell me for certain. In the case of two destroyers that were damaged, the *Zulu* and the *Nubian*, the sound halves of these vessels were successfully joined up and the resultant vessel was re-named the *Zubian*.

The shores of the Thames, in the neighbourhood of Stanford-le-Hope, are within thirty miles of Charing Cross and are interesting as being the nearest "seaside" to London. I do not mean to suggest by that they make an alternative to Bournemouth or Folkestone, but there is sea-water and a sea horizon, and the ships of all the world are passing to and fro. In this last respect the shores of Mucking compare



TWILIGHT AT LEIGH



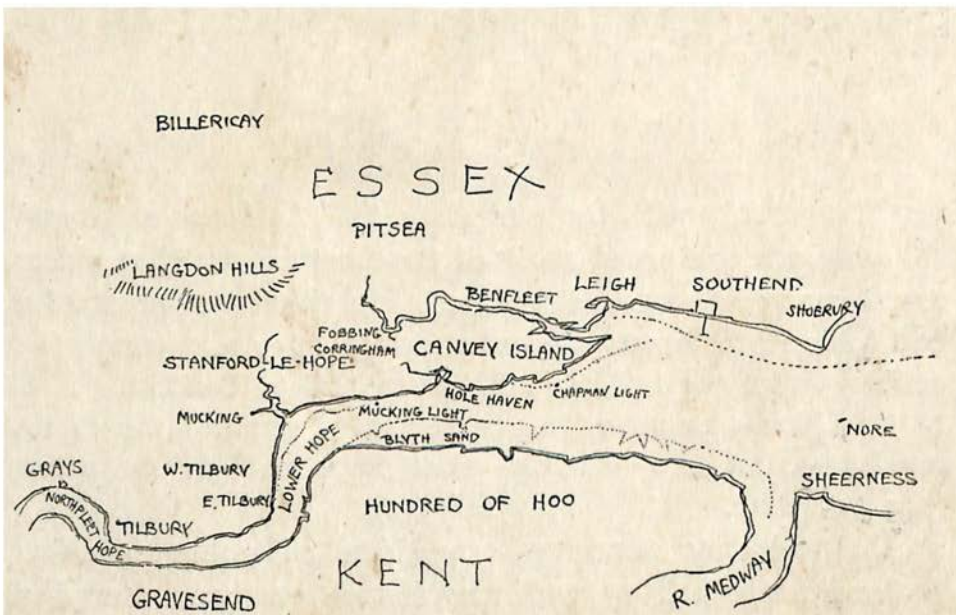
SEA REACH.

very favourably with those of Margate. As far as ships and shipping are concerned most of the famous watering places are dull as ditchwater, Brighton being about the worst of a bad lot. Here, however, you can sit all day and watch the endless variety of traffic on the river-road to London.

And this passing pageantry of ships reminds me of an incident—almost a tragedy—that happened to an artist friend of mine.

He suddenly conceived the idea of going to New Zealand for a holiday with the motive partly of studying shipping and making pictures of ships that he would encounter upon his voyage. He left Bristol in a sailing ship and saw nothing but the smoke of one steamer before he arrived in Auckland. In despair he made *one* detailed picture of the

ship he was in—a masterpiece of ultra-Pre-Raphaelite precision. He depicted the ship, as seen from the poop, in the trades, with a slight heel to starboard. When he sent it to be framed, a well-meaning and over-conscientious framer stayed up all night, trimmed down the canvas and re-stretched it, so that the masts were rigidly perpendicular and every hanging rope *mysteriously disobeying every known law of gravitation and standing away at an angle of fifteen degrees!*



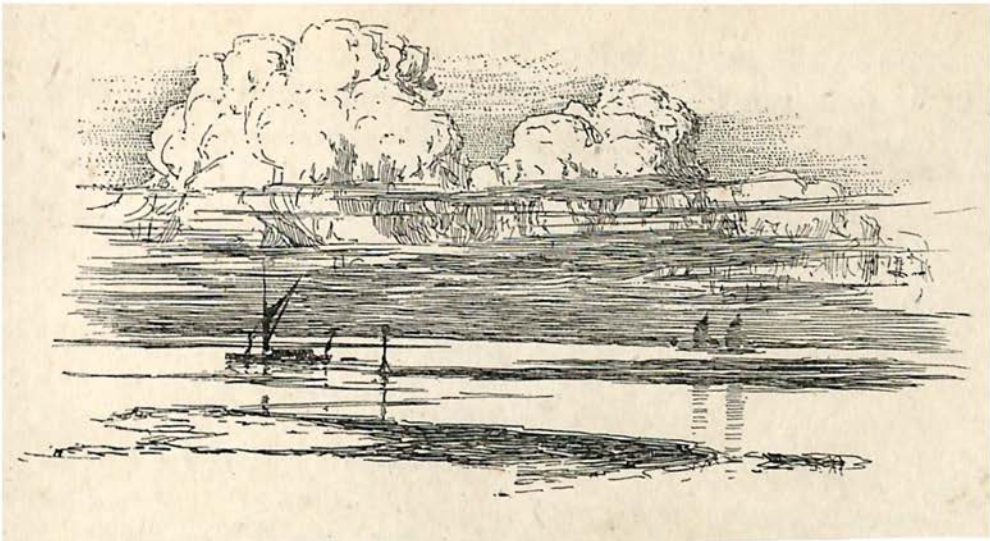
THE MOUTH OF THE THAMES.

II

THE LOST LAGOON

" for it so falls out,
That what we have we prize not to the worth
Whiles we enjoy it ; but being lack'd and lost,
Why, then we rack the value."

Much Ado, iv. 1.

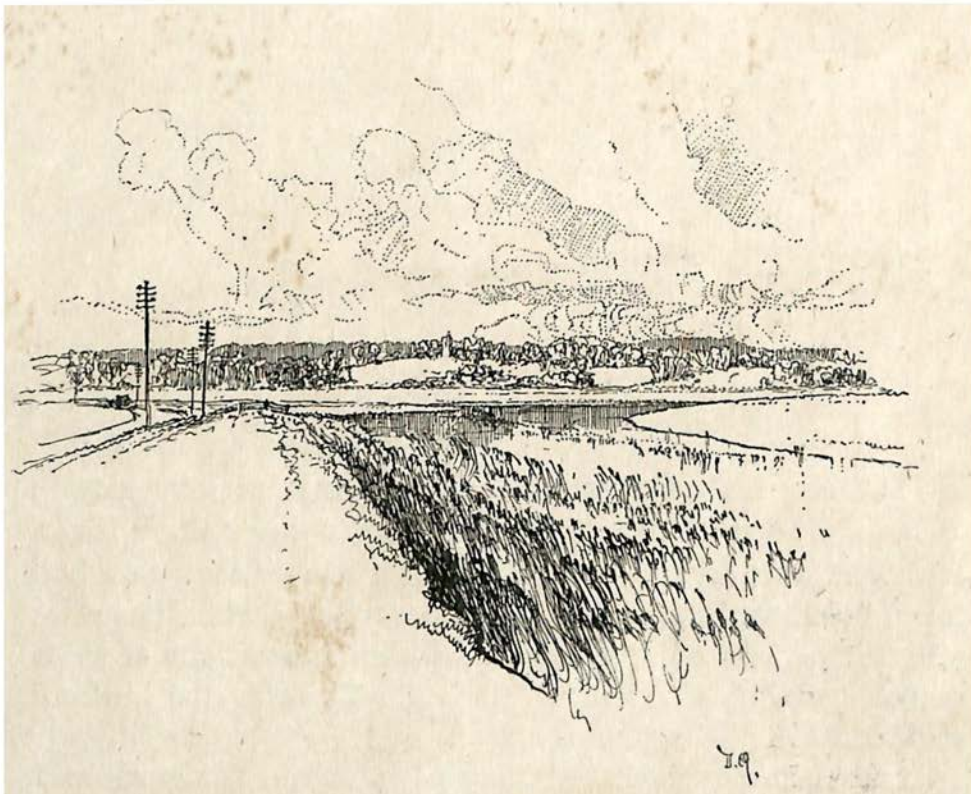


THE LOST LAGOON

I SOON achieved a position of some eminence by getting to the top of one of the oil tanks, a huge thing like a gasholder, and should have obtained a magnificent view had it not been for the fact that it was now quite dark. The river still held a field of silver light and dim suggestions of ships moved upon its shimmering surface. Towards the land all was black.

And then a remarkable thing happened, a thing which I have never been able to explain satisfactorily. Somehow, over against Fobbing—I took a bearing, so I am sure of this direction—a light appeared high up. It was too dark to see where it was. At first I thought it was from an aeroplane flying low, but it did not move. It must have been, I think, on the ridge by the church, the church which

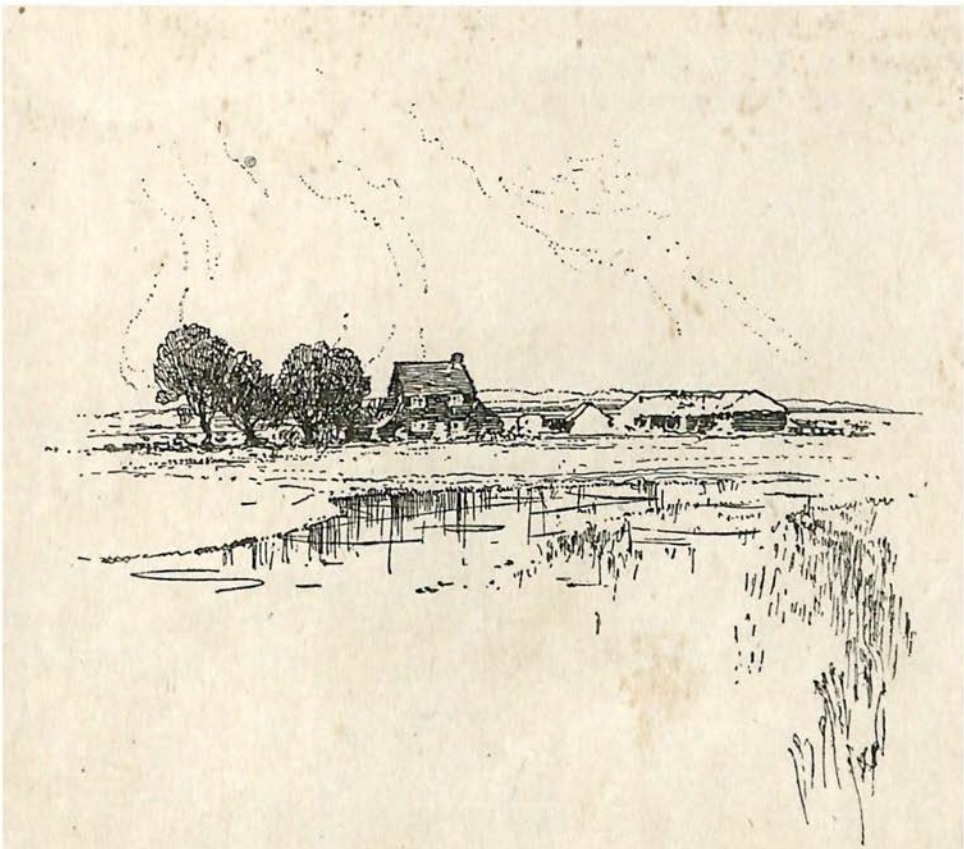
shows in the sketch below. It grew brighter and then became dim, but its light shone down and illuminated a piece of marsh-land, so that it appeared as part of some enchanted



THE MARSHES AT THAMES HAVEN.

country. You know what fairy-like effects the headlight of a car can create when driving through a flat stretch of road at night. I think this light must have been some unusually

powerful headlight, but it was so directed that its effect was absolutely magical.



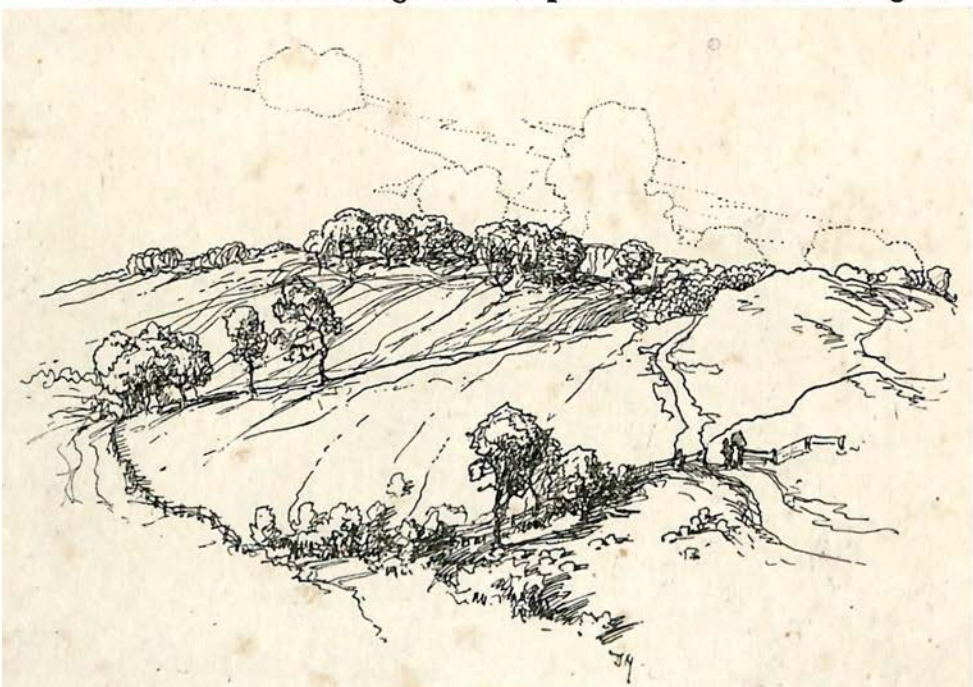
THE LONELY LITTLE HOUSE, SHELL HAVEN MARSHES.

There lay a beautiful lagoon, the like of which, with its green margin and reed-fringed islands, I have never seen. Then the picture faded and darkness reigned. I have searched

since and scoured this country to find it, but, like the lost Atlantis, it does not belong to this work-a-day world.

Two sketches, however, of this lagoon country I have shown on pages 28 and 29.

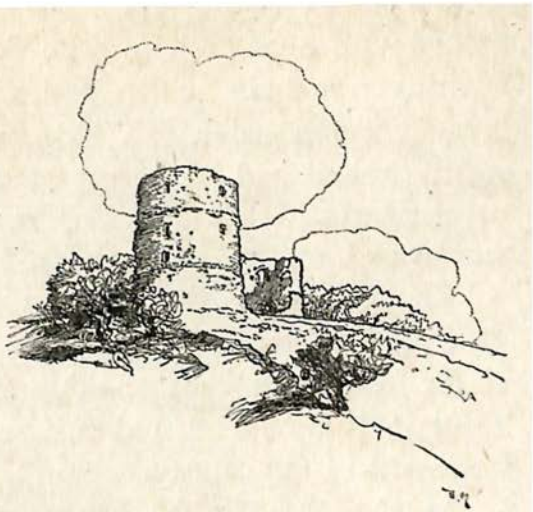
After these wanderings on the plain I determined to gain



NEAR BENFLEET.

the heights of Hadleigh, which I had so often seen from below, but never visited. I cannot find that Hadleigh Castle has figured much in history; it commands a wonderful prospect of the mouth of the Thames and a map-like view of Canvey Island and the marshes at its feet. The bold

SHOEBURYNESS



HADLEIGH CASTLE.

ruin is one of the most delightful castle views within easy access of London.

From Hadleigh to Leigh is a short bus ride, and on the day that I sketched the castle, I arrived there at twilight. By a certain amount of intrigue I managed to get to the top of the church tower before it was dark and made the sketch of the marshes which is reproduced in this chapter. I do not know of any view which so well shows the spirit of the marshes with its dim spaces and glittering creeks.

As a general rule writers on Essex try and gloss over the subject of these flat lands and saltings as though they must necessarily be found uninteresting. I do not find them so myself. There is something to me fascinating in the breadth and limitless spacing of these tracts of green by tidal waters and their flora is full of interest. Mr. J. Charles Cox in his "little guide" to Essex enumerates some of the "marine" plants to be found here.

"On the stretches of shingle and sand," he writes, "bordering the sea limit grow horned poppy, sea rocket, sea kale and saltwort, together with various species of

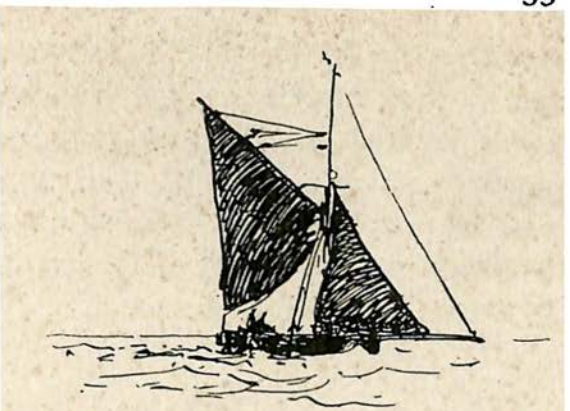
orache and sea spurge. The flora of the wide stretch of 'saltings' include golden and marsh samphires, thrift, sea lavenders, 'sea' aster, sea blite, and scurvey grass; whilst waste ground and banks near the sea are well supplied with pepperworts, sea campion, sea lettuce, asparagus, sea wormwood, and wild celery, etc."

There is also the *Eryngium maritimum*, more easily described as sea holly, the roots of which were used by our Essex forefathers for making candy, known as Candied Eringo; it is remembered in Essex history as one of the dead industries of the county.

In the *New British Traveller*, to which I have already alluded, there is an interesting note on this part of Essex one hundred and fifty years ago.

"There lies on the shore, beginning a little below Canvey Island, or Leigh Road, a great shoal, or sand, called the Black Tail, which runs out near three leagues into the sea, due east; at the end of it stands a pole or mast, set up by Trinity House, as a sea mark; this is called Shoe Beacon, from the point of land where this sand begins, which is named Shoeberry-Ness, from a town of that name standing by it. From this sand, and on the edge of Shoeberry before it, or south-west of it, all along to the mouth of Colchester Water, the shore is full of shoals and sands, with some deep channels between; all which are so full of fish, that the Barking smacks are well employed here, and the shore swarms besides with small fishing boats belonging to the villages and towns on the coasts, which come in every tide with what they take."

OFF SHOEBURYNESS: FLOOD TIDE



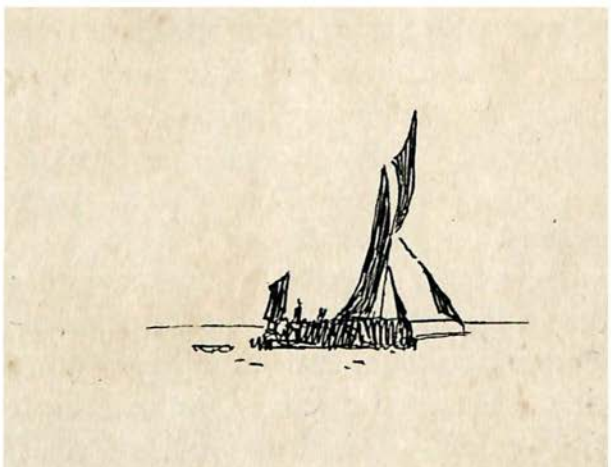
A THAMES BAWLEY.

At Rayleigh, a place that was once accessible by water, there are mounds which indicate the position of a royal castle. This was demolished, and by royal licence the stones were used for building both the church at Rayleigh and Hadleigh Castle.

When there is not any trace of an old building that is recorded in history, and the site of which is certain, many people have a vague and unformulated theory that it has somehow decayed away. This may be true of a wooden structure, but brick and stone do not alter much in a thousand years. When there is no castle in a site so marked on the Ordnance Survey it is because some one has deliberately carted it away.

Until very recent times little in the way of preserving ancient buildings was practised except in the case of churches. A castle or old manor house, once fallen into disuse, was as a matter of course used as a quarry for building materials. It has always been so. Hillah is built of the bricks of Babylon. The Crusaders' castles of the Palestine coast are of material taken from the temples of Tyre and of ancient remains, and many a stone garden roller and mounting block in some remote village in rural England has been a mile-

stone set up by Imperial Rome or a part of some monastic house that incurred the displeasure of Henry VIII, and many an old garden rockery contains hewn stones that proclaim their ecclesiastical origin and I have seen a font used as a trough in a farm-yard by an honest farmer who would have been most indignant had you accused him of sacrilege.

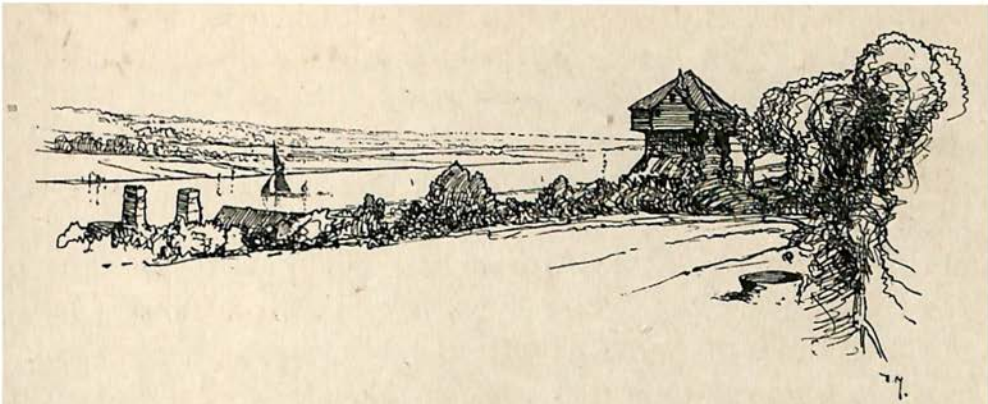


III

A PEDESTRIAN ON THE UPPER CROUCH

"The use of travelling is to regulate imagination by reality, and instead of thinking how things may be, to see them as they are."

JOHNSON.



THE CROUCH AT HULLBRIDGE.

A PEDESTRIAN ON THE UPPER CROUCH

I WROTE this originally for yachtsmen under the title *A Landlubber's Voyage*. The title was absurd. It should really have been called *The Adventures of a Sailor Ashore*, but I hesitated to do so because a wrong impression would have been given at once. It would have been anticipated as a tale of high jinks at the Pig and Bottle, or the vagaries of a Master of Craft in some small haven of Kent or Essex; whereas my story was immensely serious, and was written to fill a long-felt want on the part of the week-end small-yacht cruiser.

Has he not ridden at anchor off a mud-encumbered shore and been busy with his telescope, picking out "bits" in the distant landscape and trying to imagine what those places are like, if he could only get there? Many a time and oft

have I been brought up by the tide in the Lower Hope and scanned the dim landscape, looking out for impossible and vicarious adventures upon terra firma. There is that funny little windmill seen across the fields before you make Mucking Creek, and there are distant traces of old farmhouses, inns, and other delights. There is, too, the mystery of the Claudian Aqueduct, visible from afar but quite inexplicable. It crosses the creek, where it becomes a stream flowing out of Stanford-le-Hope. I felt I must inquire into these things, and so I started on a tour with my sketch-book. My notes were written, however, rather from the sailor's point of view and dealt primarily with harbours, sea walls, mud, light-houses, and all things pertaining to the adventurous life of sailing and exploring so dear to the hearts of many of us.

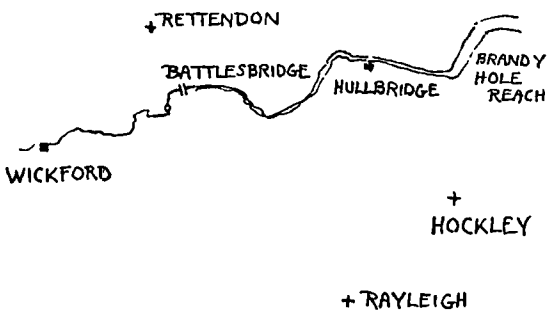
If you should hold, when you have looked at my sketch on page 39, that I have chosen a somewhat strange centre for expeditions written for a yachting paper, I am prepared with a spirited defence of my method of exploration. In the first place, I can claim that outsiders see most of the game, and that from a position so far away from the water I can see everything. There are the distant masts of Burnham, a few small sails upon the upper river, and a "stumpy" making her way towards Battlesbridge.

From these hills I can look down upon the waters of the Crouch in a spirit of detachment and offer advice about the affairs of tides and kedge anchors with the confidence of an elderly maiden lady giving hints to mothers on the up-bringing of babies. Moreover, my host, a resident of Hockley,

THE VALLEY OF THE CROUCH
AT HOCKLEY.

although not a yachtsman, is a perfect mine of information concerning these upper reaches of the river. Before I had been twenty-four hours under his roof I was simply bursting with information about oysters, smuggling, vanished bridges, tide-mills and other matters in this little-known portion of the Crouch.

This rural retreat proved an ideal halt upon my land-lubberly tour, and if you have any argument left against it as a centre I can demolish it entirely by telling you that you



cannot voyage from Burnham-on-Crouch to the upper river without passing through the parish of Hockley, for curiously enough the boundaries take a freakish jump across the estuary to embrace a very small section of land on its northern shore.

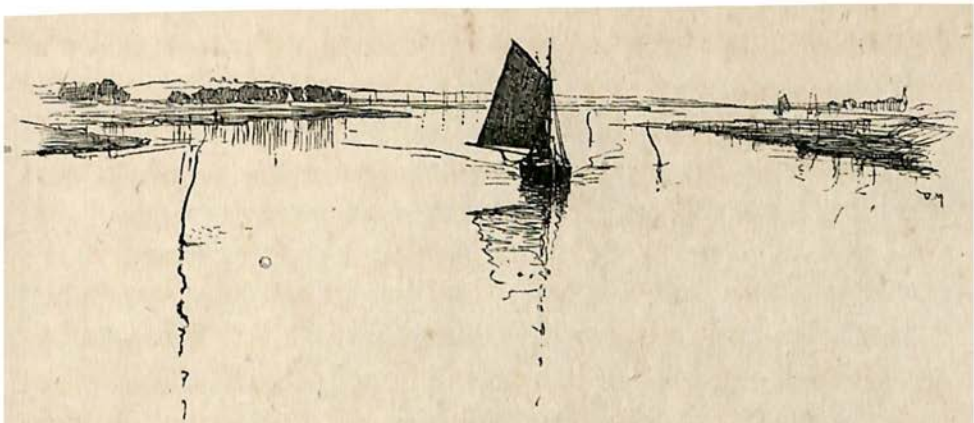
I do not know your rig, dear reader, but it may have been you I saw coming up from Burnham, as I hoped you would. At first a mere speck, but soon a discernible craft running easily over the ebb. I have sketched you in this heading—

at least, I suppose it *was* you. I thought you looked somewhat self-conscious as I sat sketch-book in hand upon the sea wall by Kingsman's Farm.

I wonder if you realized the connection between this

SOME RUINS AT BATTLESBRIDGE.

farmhouse and the name of the reach you had just negotiated —Brandy Hole. Time was when the smugglers weighted and sank their tubs in this reach, to fish them up again on some quiet day, or, still better, on some dark night. Rumour says



AGAINST THE EBB.

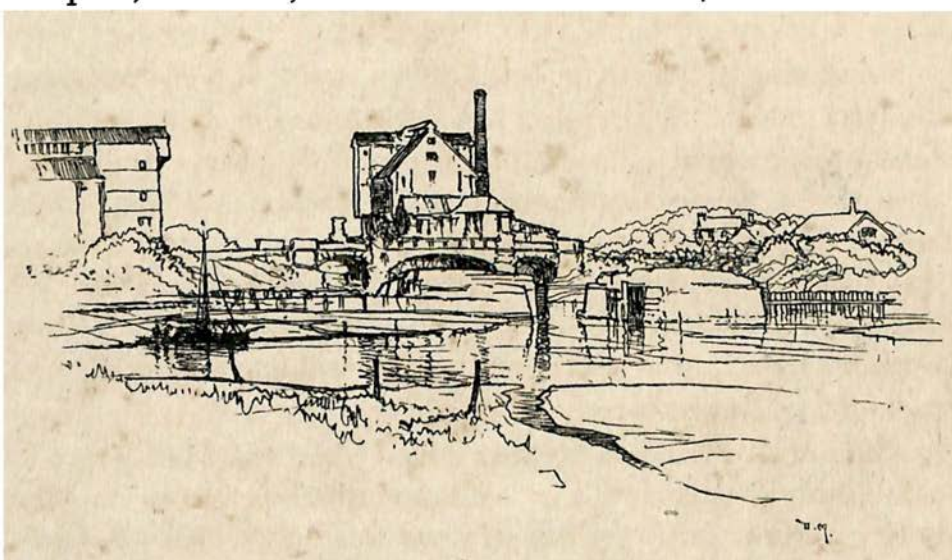
that Kingsman's always possessed a well-stocked cellar. If so, then the King's Man must have been a corrupt fellow, or, what is more probable, the King's men, finding that prevention was better than cure, took possession of the place and the name thus acquired has been retained since.

I am ignorant of the derivation of the name Hullbridge or of the significance, rather, of the first syllable. That there was a bridge here—destroyed, I believe, about the time of the Civil War—is an unchallenged tradition. There are enough big stones, mounting blocks, foundations, and stone walls to be seen in the village to account for a good deal of the vanished masonry.

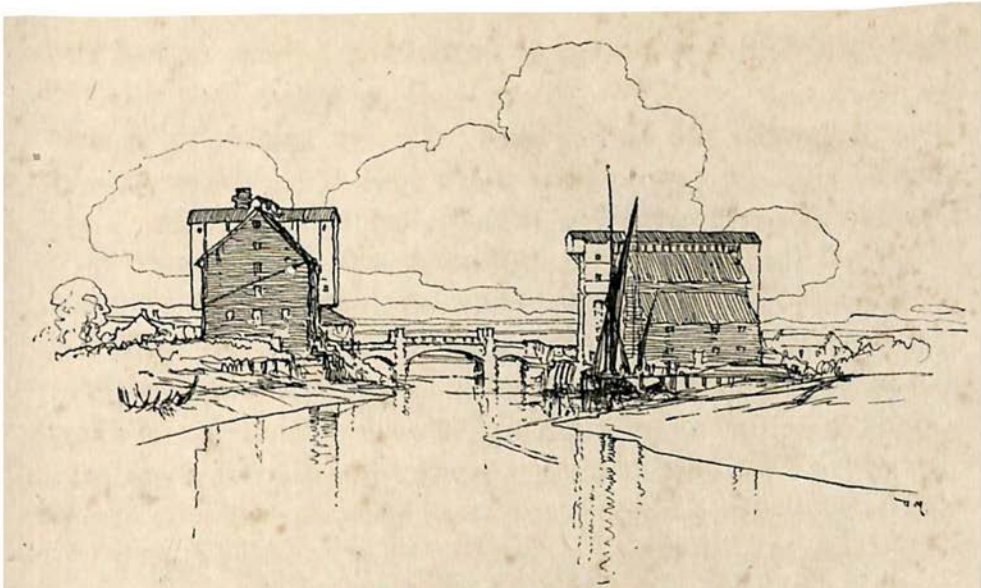
The most intriguing thing, however, about Hullbridge is a building of such fantastic and delightful design that I can only account for it as the House of Peter Pan. I have sketched it at the end of this chapter, and if you know of a

better name for it I will—in spite of being a Scot—stand you a drink.

I was somewhat disillusioned on being told by a prosaic resident that this structure was no less than a cistern surrounding an artesian well. I am sure he was wrong. He was one of those people, no doubt, like Mr. Chesterton's creation, "the man who knew too much"—a wretched fellow who can prove with chuckles of fiendish exultation that love is nothing but an excess of oxygen in the blood, that nobody made cakes in England before the reign of William and Mary, and therefore the story of Alfred the Great's attempt to boost gas cooking cannot be true, and that everything that ever happened is capable of a very dull explanation. I repeat, therefore, that this is the House of Peter Pan.



BATTLESBRIDGE ABOVE THE TIDE MILLS.



THE MILLS OF BATTLESBRIDGE.

Some two or three miles further up the river stand the tide-mills of Battlesbridge. They are now tide-mills only in name, steam having taken the place of water-power. Consequently the sluice gate is open and the whole machinery of conserving the waters is derelict. The appearance of these two mills, one on each side of the bridge, is very striking when seen from downstream. The one on the left looks like one house trying to carry another on its back, a grotesque family likeness on a huge scale to the Hullbridge House of Peter Pan.

Above the bridge is another mill at the foot of which is some ruinous masonry and broken brickwork in a dismal state of decay. It seems strange that such an obvious device as a tide-mill should have become like a wind-mill, an

apparently doomed process of harnessing power. I know of one working in Suffolk and one in Hampshire, but most of these tide-mills are *in extremis*. The Sidlesham mills near Chichester have been pulled down and the old tide-mill at Fareham is nothing more now than a picturesque ruin.

Of all these rapidly disappearing old-world things there is one happily that does not show any signs of being ousted, and that is the sailing barge. Petrol, which has ousted so many old methods, has actually helped these, for with an auxiliary motor, a barge can be still more effective as a cheap method of transport, being less likely to be held up by adverse weather conditions and able to steal a march on time and tide when opportunity allows.

The limit of navigation in the Crouch, even for very small boats, is reached at Wickford, and so our exploration of the possibilities of these upper reaches comes to an end.

THE HOUSE OF PETER PAN.

IV

IN THE MOUNTAINS OF ESSEX

" In the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed is king."

AN UPLAND OF ESSEX.

IN THE MOUNTAINS OF ESSEX

I HAVE always held that in travelling over country with sketch-book and note-book, it is a great disadvantage to know too much about it. To approach some well-known region as if it had been unexplored by man, or at any rate by artists, makes for a fresh view of things in general. I am tempted, however, to break this custom in approaching the study of Essex, because I have come across a delightful old book of the eighteenth century entitled :

The New British Traveller

or

A complete modern universal display of Great Britain and

Ireland comprising all that is worthy of observation in every county and containing a Full, Ample and Circumstantial Account of every Thing remarkable, etc.

Being a Work calculated equally to please the Polite—entertain the Curious—instruct the Uninformed—and direct the Traveller.

I am told that this book is the first of all "road books" in this country and the ancestor, therefore, of the now familiar traveller's *vade mecum* of the King's Highway.

The author's preliminary description of Essex is very intriguing, and it seems that the traveller will encounter many difficulties in this strange land.

"The air of the county in the inland parts is salubrious, but the marshes, and those places which border on the Thames, are very unhealthy, particularly to strangers, who seldom escape agues, the sure consequence of a moist and foggy atmosphere; but those parts which lie to the West and North are as healthy and delightful as any other county in England. It is a common observation that the wise and bountiful Author of nature has so blended his works together, that even those we are apt to find fault with have their peculiar advantages; thus the marshy grounds in Essex afford most excellent pasture; nor is there a county in England where provisions in general are in greater plenty. The London markets are supplied by Essex with vast quantities of corn, and great number of oxen, calves, and sheep; they also breed great numbers of horses, and the

THE BELL INN AT HORNDON ON THE HILL.

fish, particularly oysters, bring vast sums annually to this county; there are great numbers of wild-fowl near the Thames which are sold in London to the dealers."

As to the inhabitants:

"In the more interior parts, those who follow husbandry, like the fishermen who reside near the Thames, are plain, blunt and honest, *whilst the artists in the manufacturing towns are industrious and sober.*"

It's all very well people making out that artists often overdo the Bohemian atmosphere. Here we have evidence that in Essex at least we are most staid and respectable people.

Several items should be noted by the traveller in Essex for future reference. Epping is famous for sausages of unusual magnificence. Harwich men "boast that their town is walled and their streets paved with clay; and yet, that one is as strong, and others as clean, as those that are built or paved with stone. The fact indeed is true, for there is a kind of clay in the cliff, between the town and the Beacon Hill adjoining, which, when it falls down into the sea, where it is beaten with the waves and the weather, turns gradually into stone; but the chief reason assigned is, from the water of a certain spring or well, which, rising in the cliff, runs down into the sea among those pieces of clay, and petrifies them as it runs, and the force of the sea often stirring, and perhaps turning, the lumps of clay, when storms of wind may give force

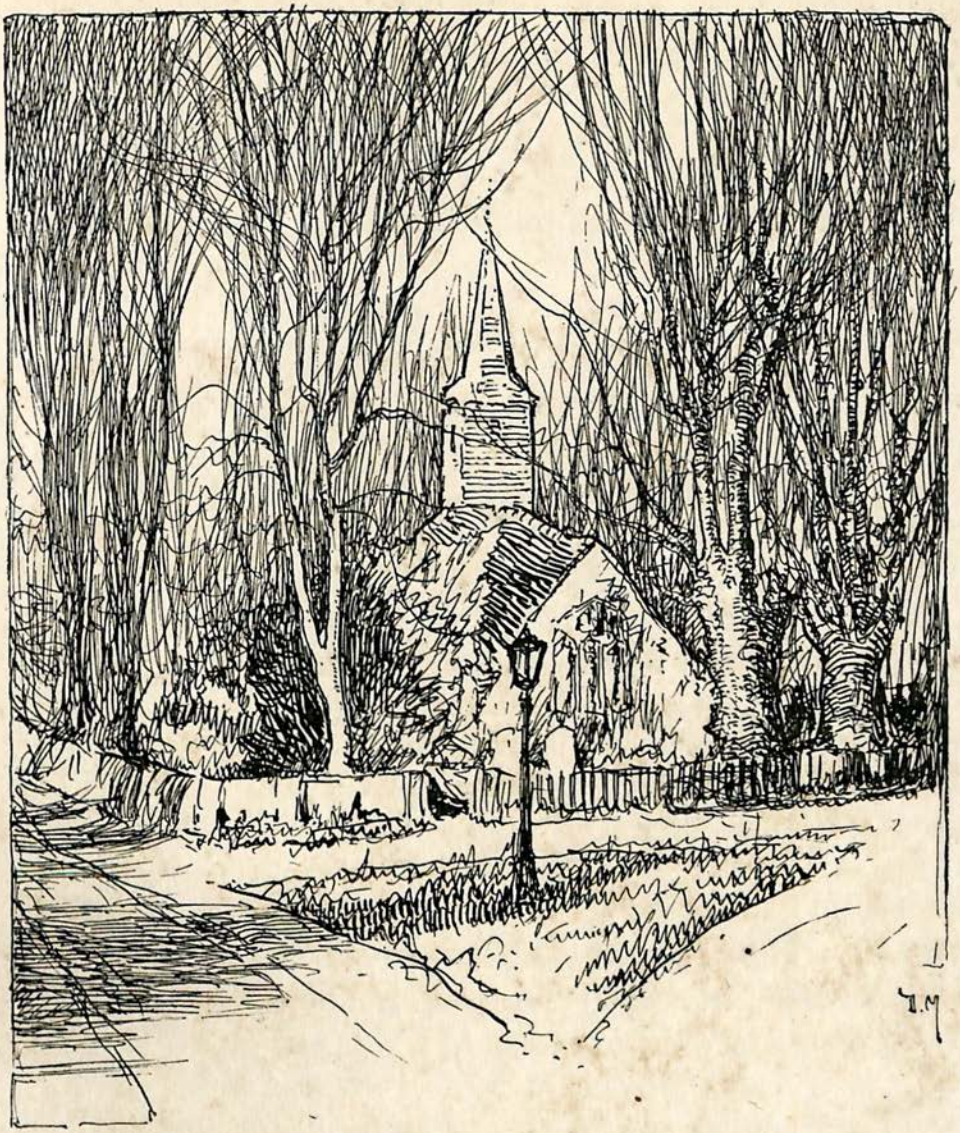
enough to the water, causing them to harden everywhere alike; otherwise those which are not quite sunk in the water of the spring would be petrified in part.

"These stones are gathered up to pave the streets and build the houses, and are, indeed, very hard. It is remarkable that some of them, taken up before they are thoroughly petrified, will, upon breaking, appear to be hard as stone without, and soft as clay in the middle; whereas others that have lain a due time will be thoroughly stone to the centre, and full as hard without."

The view from Great Burstead, or rather from Thorndon Hill, arouses such enthusiasm in the writer that he quite lets himself go, for the prospect he records "exceeds imagination."

"The hills in Kent, the sea, the River Thames, with vessels sailing to and from London, together with many well-cultivated fields and pleasant villages, which every way present themselves, astonish the spectator. When a classical scholar takes a view of all the objects which present themselves to his eyes from this eminence, it brings to his remembrance the speech of Hannibal in Livy, when from the Alps he showed his soldiers the beauties of Italy, and encouraged them, from the hopes of possessing that garden of the world, to march against the Romans with alacrity."

After this I shall not dare to describe the view overlooking Tilbury and the Thames. Perhaps it is less like Italy than it was in those days, when the manufacture of cement was



THE OLD CHURCH,
LANGDON HILLS.

unknown and when no great docks extended along this region of the river.

There is also an interesting note on the fishing smacks of the Thames, probably the ancestors of the Thames Bawley.

"Certainly these smacks are very useful vessels to the public upon many occasions; as particularly in time of war they are used as press-smacks, running to all the Northern and Western coasts to pick up seamen to man the navy, when any expedition is at hand that requires a sudden equipment. At other times, being excellent sailers, they are tenders to particular men-of-war; and, on an expedition, they have been made use of as machines for the blowing up fortified ports, as formerly at St. Malo, etc."

I am writing in January. The season immediately following Christmas is spent by some in roaming abroad. In the Alps, the much-advertised delights of winter sports make for a season which rivals the summer in respect of numbers. There are two scenic antidotes to our conventional life in cities. They both have an element of freedom from formality and restraint. One is the sea, and the other "the mountains." The sea, however, is rather wet in the winter and the mountains are so far away.

"Which are the nearest mountains to London?" I asked one day, thinking rather vaguely of the Peak or the steep escarpments of the South Downs. A cheery voice answered,

"Try Essex." This *jeu d'esprit* was taken up almost hilariously by every one present.

He laughs best, however, who laughs last, and as these sketches are not studio romances, but accurate delineations of actual scenery in Essex and within twenty-one miles of London, I think I can claim to have got the laugh on my side. It all depends on what we call a mountain.

The old definition in geography books of schooldays which I can still faintly remember, was "a hill of 1000 feet or more in height." It would seem, nevertheless, that some comparative standard should be applied.

In the country of the blind, the one-eyed is King. According to the philosophy of the Red Queen (Behind the Looking-Glass) a 1000-foot peak in the Alps would not be a peak at all.

"*Mountains,*" she exclaims with scorn, "I have seen mountains to which that would be a *valley!*"

And so, upon the flat lands that border upon the tidal estuaries of Essex and from a vantage-point which is not only on sea-level, but often below it, I may be allowed the artistic licence of calling these tumbled sandy heights rising from the clay of the plains by the name of mountains. And if you come across them, as I did, unexpectedly when tramping on the level marsh, you, too, would call them by this name.

I was walking along the sea-wall that guards the marshes from the tidal waters of the Lower Hope, and below Tilbury, and approaching the picturesque village of Mucking, when

A SNOW SCENE IN THE LANGDON HILLS

I determined to strike inland and gain the high ground known as the Langdon Hills. I could not see this ridge on account of the low visibility. Knowing the difficulty of progress in a land of ditches, I did not take the most direct track, but one which at last brought me out to a road by Stanford-le-Hope.

A sudden incline in the road, very noticeable in so level a country, took me into the midst of Horndon-on-the-Hill, and I found myself at the Bell, a coaching inn of long ago, still retaining in its quaint courtyard, which I have sketched for you here, the atmosphere of coaching days and coaching ways. Time was when mine host of the Bell drove his own coach daily to Aldgate and back.

Two miles, and I am at the foot of Langdon Hills, as the mist suddenly disperses. After the level expanses of land, when the eye of the traveller is hungry for a hill, they do, indeed, appear as mountains. From the top, which is crowned with pine and larch, a glorious view spreads out. The steep, fern-carpeted woodlands fall away to marshland and the broad Thames, and beyond this, dimly seen, the blueness of the hills of Kent.

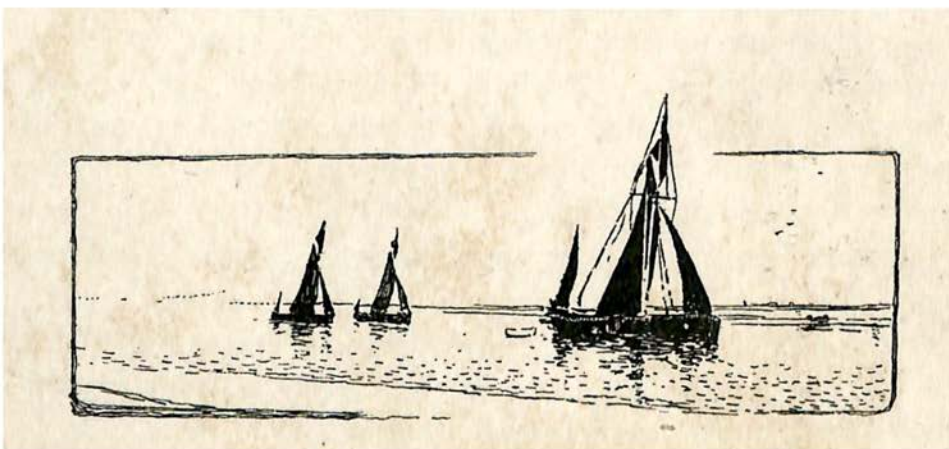
Mountnessing, for all its brave name, is a summit 100 feet short of this hill, which tops 378. He who stands on the look-out on the roof of the Crown Inn is over 400 feet above the sea and on the highest point in Essex. Danbury, near Chelmsford, however, claims the same height.

The southern slopes of the hills abound in badgers, and the introduction of two of these animals, the English

equivalent of the bear, into my picture is not merely an artist's licence. By the way, the length of a full-grown badger is 2 feet 6 inches without its tail.

On a clear day there is a wonderful prospect from here—the sea towards the east, and south and west the busy river, like a great glittering snake, stretching its sinuous length to London.

There go the ships: liners and tramps, barges and schooners, wood-boats from the frozen north, orange-boats from the torrid south, colliers, fish-carriers, barques and sailormen from the roaring forties, mostly flying the red ensign, ambassadors of our far-flung lines of commerce. To and fro, to and fro upon the earth, between London and the world and between the world and London—the warp and woof of an Empire's weaving.



V

THE FORESTS OF ESSEX

"Chigwell, my dear fellow, is the greatest place in the world. . . . Such a delicious old inn, opposite the churchyard—such a lovely ride—such beautiful forest scenery—such an out-of-the-world, rural place—such a sexton! I say again, name your day."

CHARLES DICKENS.

IN HATFIELD FOREST.

THE FORESTS OF ESSEX

AT one time the whole of Essex was forest land. It has now only three "official forests," that is, three tracts of country still bearing the name "forest": Hainault, Hatfield, and Epping.

A certain romance, although one not removed from tragedy, will always be associated with the nation's new landscape treasure of Hatfield Forest. Mr. Edward North Buxton for many years has been instrumental in saving much of the old forest land of Essex. It was one of his

last acts, before his death, to hand over to his son the money for the purchase of a large tract of Hatfield Forest—some two hundred acres. This woodland glade of Essex, a deer park since Tudor days, lies near Bishop's Stortford, which is thirty miles from Liverpool Street Station.

A great deal of other land, part of this same Hatfield Forest, is in the market, including the old house; Hallingbury Place, which I have sketched here also, is in the market, and I was told by the agents in charge of the estate that if some six public-spirited men could each follow Mr. Buxton's generous example to the extent of £500 apiece, the whole of nine hundred acres could be secured as a national park. The statement, however, made in various newspapers that it is only a part of the timber that has been sold, and that the woodland amenities of the land will be preserved, must be taken with several grains of salt.

I went down to Bishop's Stortford and drove over to the newly acquired land to verify or refute this statement, and saw the trees marked out for the woodman's axe. If all are coming down that are numbered in white paint, then the amenities of these glades and grass drives will most certainly be ruined—from the point of view of woodlands. Perhaps even now something may be done to buy back the trees, many of which, I understand, had been sold to a firm of timber merchants before the purchase on behalf of Mr. Buxton had been made. There are some tracts of this estate, however, which will still look very rich in foliage when summer comes, and I have sketched, therefore, one grass road, not as it is

A WINTER LANDSCAPE IN HATFIELD FOREST

now, but as it will appear when the big trees are down and a distant prospect of foliage and undergrowth lends contrast to the open heath.

A humorous incident enlivened my study of the forest upon a somewhat dull day. As I reached the open glade of the newly acquired forest land, a huntsman appeared, and his red coat enriched the winter scene. Then a stag bounded into the field of vision, and then in full cry, but in an opposite direction to that taken by the stag, a pack of hounds and the whole field. They were lost to sight, and *the stag trotted after them looking rather bored!* It was not for some time, when it dawned on me that I was witnessing a fox hunt and the stag was a mere incident. There are deer in the park, and the circumstantial evidence of the stag was so strong in my mind that I had not looked very critically at the distant hounds.

Hatfield Forest, this new and beautiful addition to the national preserves within easy access of London, will be like Box Hill, a very welcome holiday ground to Londoners. It is the third of the great tracts of woodland in Essex to retain the name "forest." Hainault Forest is preserved only in name. Hatfield Forest now becomes, like Epping, a national park.

The "capital" of Hainault Forest is Chigwell. Curiously enough, although it lies on a well-known bus route from London and is distant from Liverpool Street only ten miles, it is still quaint and old-world and free from the attentions of the speculative builder. I should think in 1841, when

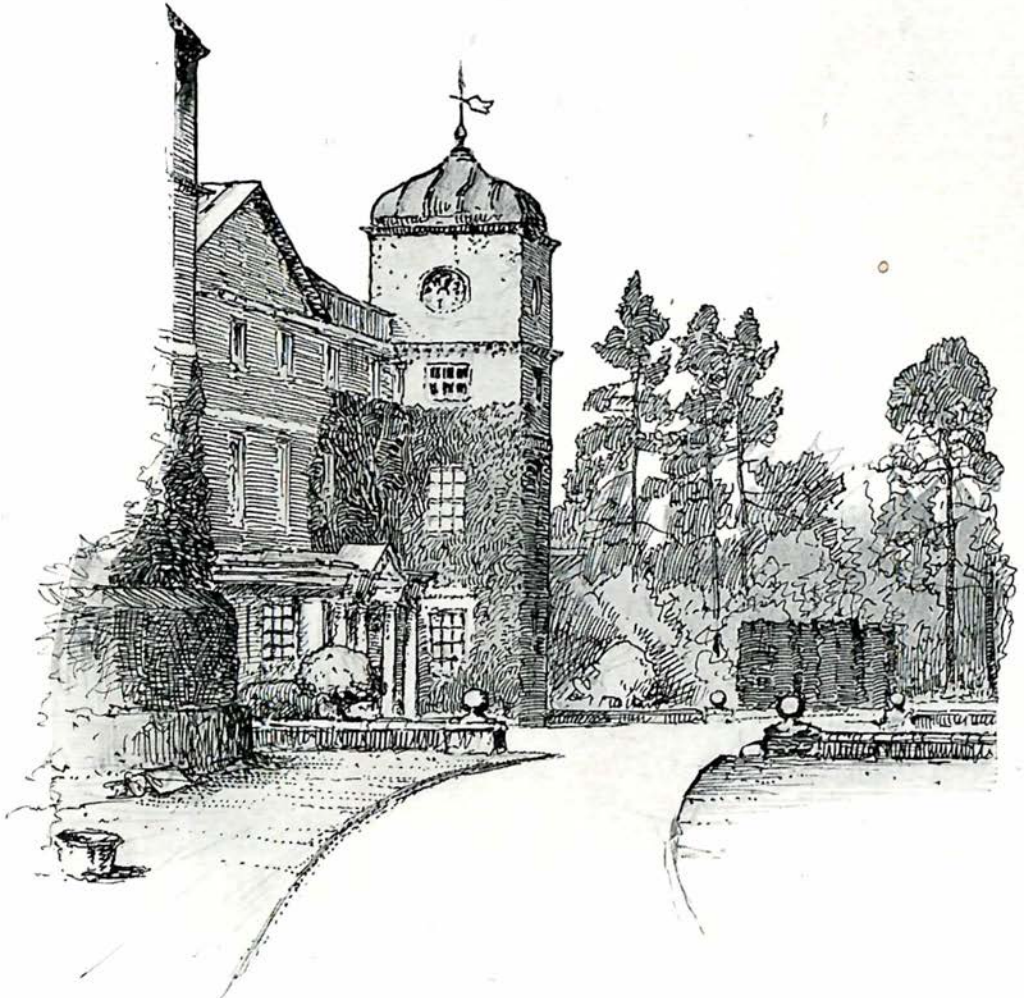
Dickens wrote to Forster, this place must have been in many respects as it is to-day.

"Chigwell, my dear fellow, is the greatest place in the world," he writes. "Name your day for going. Such a delicious old inn, opposite the churchyard—such a lovely ride—such beautiful forest scenery—such an out-of-the-way, rural place—such a sexton! I say again, name your day."

The description still holds good in part. I have not the pleasure of the acquaintance of the sexton, and the forest "scenery" has been somewhat thinned, but the "delicious old inn," The King's Head, is still there as large as life. It is famous throughout the world as the original of The Maypole in *Barnaby Rudge.*

The "Dickens interest" is regarded as a great attraction by the people of Chigwell, but one would-be guide had allowed his enterprise to outrun either his discretion or his historical knowledge. He offered to show us the place where Charles Dickens fought a duel with Barnaby Rudge, and the very spot where General Gordon harangued the multitude on the occasion of the Gordon riots!

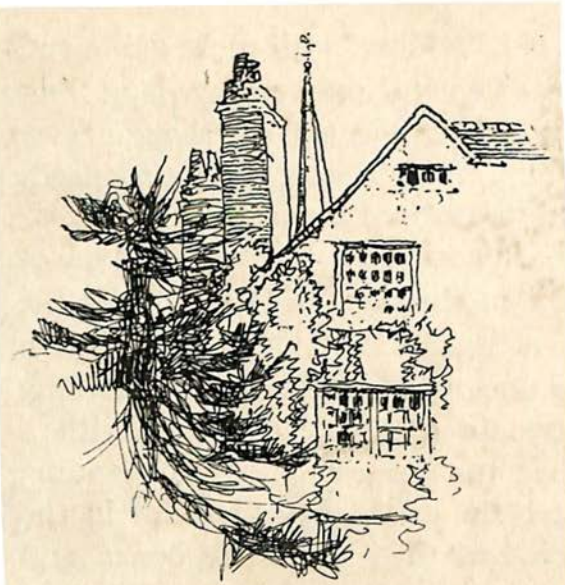
I have sketched here a view of the King's Head showing the courtyard at the back of the rambling building. When Dickens described this old inn he let himself go a little beyond the actual scene, especially in regard to chimneys and gables, for he writes:



HALLINGBURY PLACE, HATFIELD FOREST

"The Maypole was an old building, with more gable-ends than a lazy man would care to count on a sunny day; huge zigzag chimneys, out of which it seemed as though even smoke could not choose but come in more than naturally fantastic shapes, imparted to it in its tortuous progress; and vast stables, gloomy, ruinous and empty. The place was said to have been built in the days of King Henry the Eighth; and there was a legend, not only that Queen Elizabeth had slept there one night while upon a hunting excursion, to wit, in a certain oak-panelled room with a deep bay-window, but that next morning, while standing on a mounting block before the door, with one foot in the stirrup, the virgin monarch had then and there boxed and cuffed an unlucky page for some neglect of duty. Whether these, and many other stories of the like nature, were true or untrue, The Maypole was really an old house, a very old house, perhaps as old as it claimed to be, and perhaps older, which will sometimes happen with houses of an uncertain, as with ladies of a certain, age. Its windows were old diamond-paned lattices, its floor sunken and uneven, its ceilings blackened by the hand of Time, and heavy with massive beams."

It has been conjectured by some antiquaries that the great size of the King's Head buildings, with adjoining stabling, is evidence of their use for some other purpose than that of an inn. The needs of the road and of the village would never, it has been said, have warranted such extensive buildings.



A GABLE OF THE KING'S HEAD, CHIGWELL.

It is on record, however, that in the reign of Elizabeth and of James I the Forest Court was held at Chigwell, and it is possible that this is the explanation of the unusual roominess and magnificence of this wayside inn. A description of the interior of one of the rooms in this rambling building is given in *Barnaby Rudge.*

"It was spacious enough in all conscience, occupying the whole depth of the house, and having at either end a great bay-window, as large as many modern rooms; in which some few panes of stained glass emblazoned with fragments of armorial bearings, though cracked and patched and shattered, yet remained; attesting, by their presence, that the former owner had made the very light subservient to his state, and pressed the sun itself into his list of flatterers; bidding it, when it shone into his chamber, reflect the badges of his ancient family, and take new hues and colours from their pride."

The "scenery" of the forest has been much reduced by

the builder, but round Chigwell itself there are still some very pleasant glades. I have sketched two views here; one in the winter looking towards the wooded ridge by

CHIGWELL.

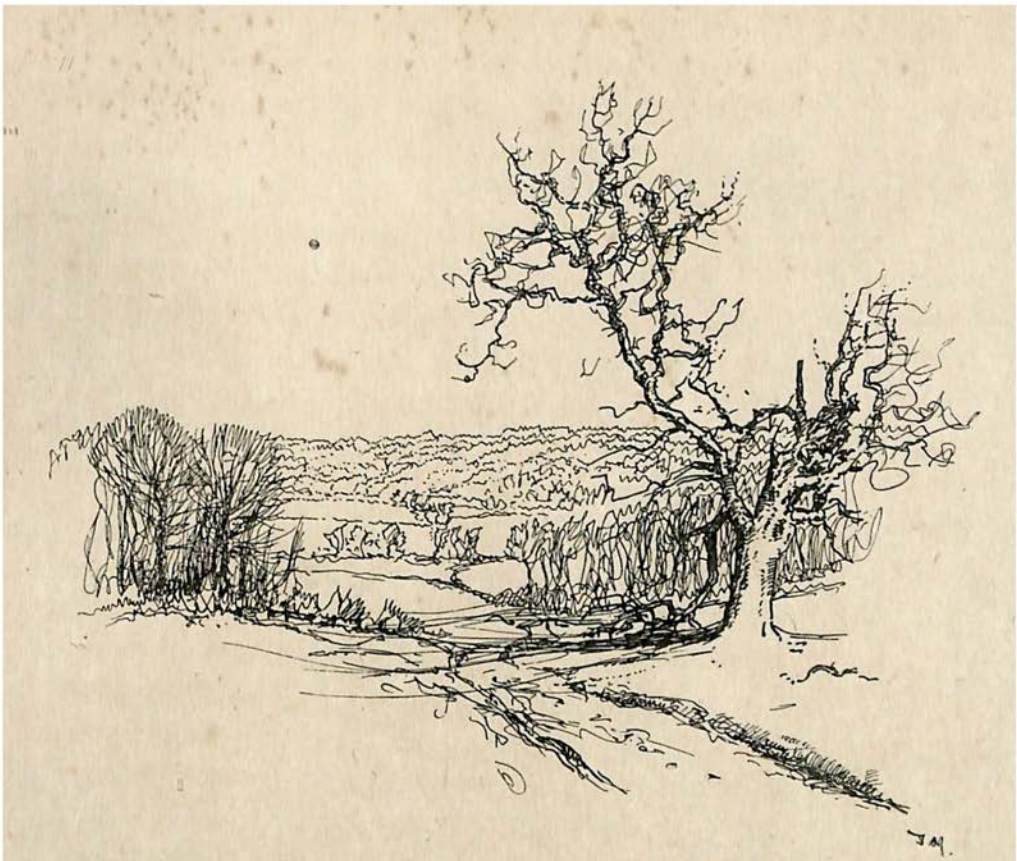
Romford, and the other in summer from a point not far from the station. Great oaks can still be seen upon these pasture-slopes.

The history of Epping Forest is largely the history of south-eastern Essex; in fact so much has the forest dominated the history of the country, that it was known as the Forest of Essex long before it received its present designation.

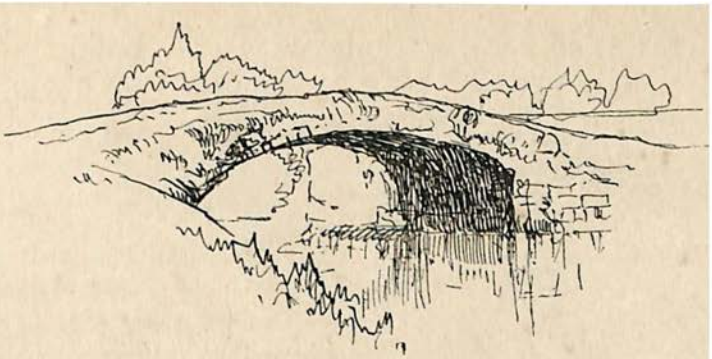
Places now miles away, which would be hard put to find even a coppice within their borders, were once but isolated hamlets in the heart of this great forest, which in the Middle Ages covered many times its present area.

The records of the forest are crowded with historical happenings. Here it was, according to tradition, that Boadicea, Queen of the Iceni, put up her last great fight for freedom against the yoke of Rome. "About a mile from the present town of Epping," writes Mr. P. J. S. Perceval in his book, *London's Forest*, "is an ancient camp known as Amesbury or Ambresbury Banks where, in the opinion of many, and according to local belief, the ill-fated Boadicea made her last stand. Experts have proved the camp to be a purely British entrenchment as distinct from a Roman fortification. Many rude pieces of British handiwork have been found to warrant its association with that ancient people."

There is another school of thought which places the camp between Waltham and Epping, on a high ridge known as Epping Upland, three miles from the former spot; but wherever the camp of the brave unlucky queen was situated it is almost certain that the field of the battle that checked her victorious career so disastrously was in the forest somewhere between these two places.



IN HAINAULT FOREST.



HAROLD'S BRIDGE, WALTHAM ABBEY.

Boadicea began the connection of the forest with royalty, and many others followed her. Next in importance was, perhaps Harold, the last of the Saxon kings, who built Waltham Abbey in the confines of the forest he loved so well.

As a hunting ground the forest remained high in royal favour through the centuries that followed, and came, perhaps, into most prominence with Henry VIII and his daughter, Queen Elizabeth.

It was the forest that heard the wooing of Anne Boleyn by the much-married monarch, and within its confines, too, it is said that he waited, with callous inconsistency, to hear the sound of the gun from the Tower of London that told him that her head had fallen under the axe and that he was now free to woo Jane Seymour.*

Queen Elizabeth had many hunting-lodges within the forest and there is still one of these that can be seen to-day

* Richmond Park is also said to be the place where Henry waited for the sound of the fatal gun, and there can be no actual certainty on this point.

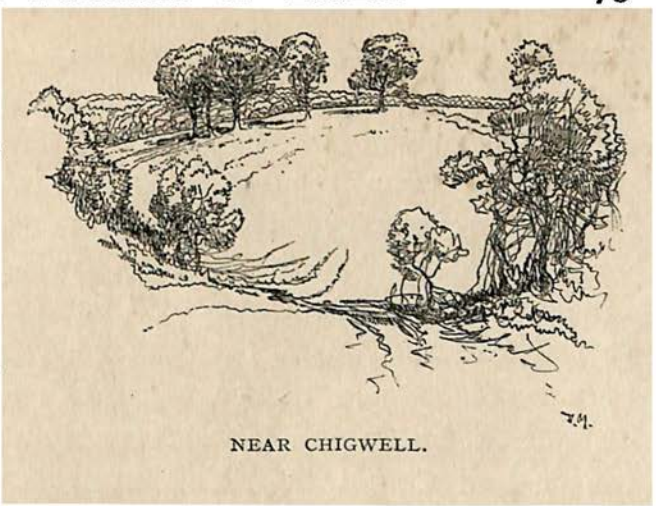
at Chingford, a timbered Tudor building that stands overlooking a great stretch of undulating forest.

The two Charleses used to hunt the forest, and an old rhyme commemorates how once :

> " The second Charles of England
> Rode forth one Christmastide
> To hunt a gallant stag of ten,
> Of Chingford woods the pride."

In the subsequent reigns, especially those of the Georges, the forest, for some reason or another, seems to have been neglected. Now came the chance for the land-grabbers, who, royal protection being but nominal, began to filch parts of the forest for their own, and some was sold by the Crown, and thus by fair means or foul—nearly always the latter—the forest began to shrink rapidly. This shrinkage continued down to quite modern times, and it was not until the 'seventies that the Epping Forest Act put a stop to it, and in 1882 all that remained of this great woodland was formally handed over to the Corporation of the City of London and declared " open to the public for ever."

The boundaries of the Forest of Essex in olden times were never very clearly defined ; it usually remaining at the whim of the reigning monarch according to how much land he wished to hunt. King and people did not always agree as to what was forest and what was land for tillage, and on different occasions the people appointed " twelve lawful knights to perambulate the forest to define its exact borders." The old



NEAR CHIGWELL.

records of these journeys are not without humour. The knights are never said to have ridden or walked — they always perambulated — and when they presented their report to the king he invariably quarrelled with their decision and refused to allow and ordered the knights to "perambulate anew."

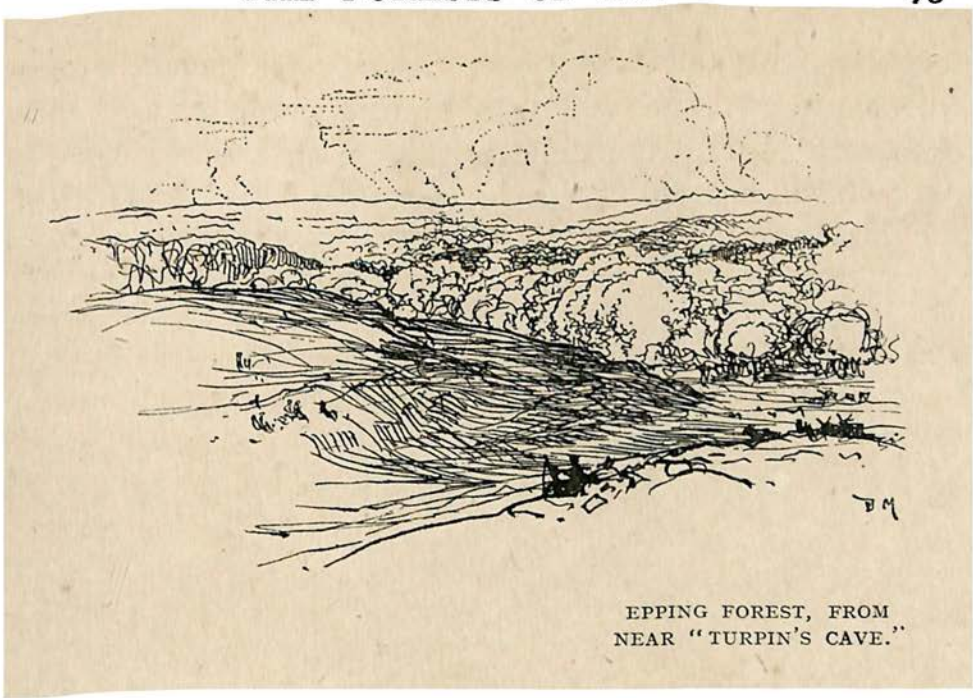
As was only natural Epping Forest was a great resort of highwaymen and robbers of all kinds, amongst whom the most notorious were a band of desperadoes, who flourished towards the close of the seventeenth century, known as the Waltham Blacks, from their habit of blackening their faces with charcoal. These bold outlaws once even made an attempt to capture William III and all but succeeded in their plan. So dangerous to travellers did these men become that a special Act of Parliament, known as "The Black Act," was passed to deal with them. This, however, had little effect, and the outlaws actually sent a signed statement of defiance; and it was not until a cavalry patrol was sent to the forest that the band was dispersed.

There is a small inn near High Beech bearing the romantic

name of "Turpin's Cave," built on the supposed site of a hiding-place of notorious highwaymen, who "operated" much in this district on the Norwich mail. Even a hundred years ago robbery was frequent in the forest, whose glades and hidden retreats afforded such fine cover for escape.

The mediæval Easter Hunt in the forest and the Easter Monday Hunt of the London Citizens of more modern times (which continued up to the middle of the last century) were once quite distinct, though often looked upon as the same. It is of the latter, which was formerly attended by the Lord Mayor and Corporation, that most is heard, chiefly of a

THE WOODMAN'S AXE AT HIGH BEECH.



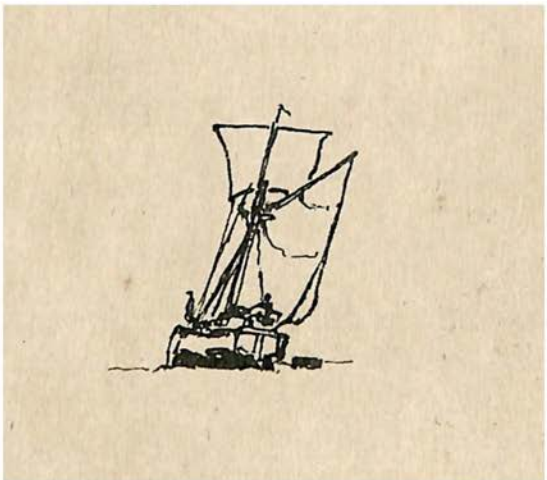
EPPING FOREST, FROM NEAR "TURPIN'S CAVE."

satirical nature. Thomas D'Infrey, the seventeenth-century wit, in his *Pills to Purge Melancholy*, has an account of this hunt in which :

> "My lord, he takes a staff in hand to beat the bushes o'er,
> I must confess it was a work he ne'er had done before.
> A creature pounceth from a bush which made them all to laugh,
> My lord, he cried : 'A hare ! a hare ! ' but it proved an Essex calf."

Later on in these verses is a description of the scene when a real hare is sighted. The bearer of the city mace and sword, thinking the cry "A hare ! a hare ! " to give warning

of the approach of some fierce forest monster, gallantly drew the sword of state, and with knitted brows and set lips advanced to meet the timid beast. With a flourish of his weapon the intrepid citizen bravely cries, "Let him come! Let him come! I thank my God I fear him not!"



VI

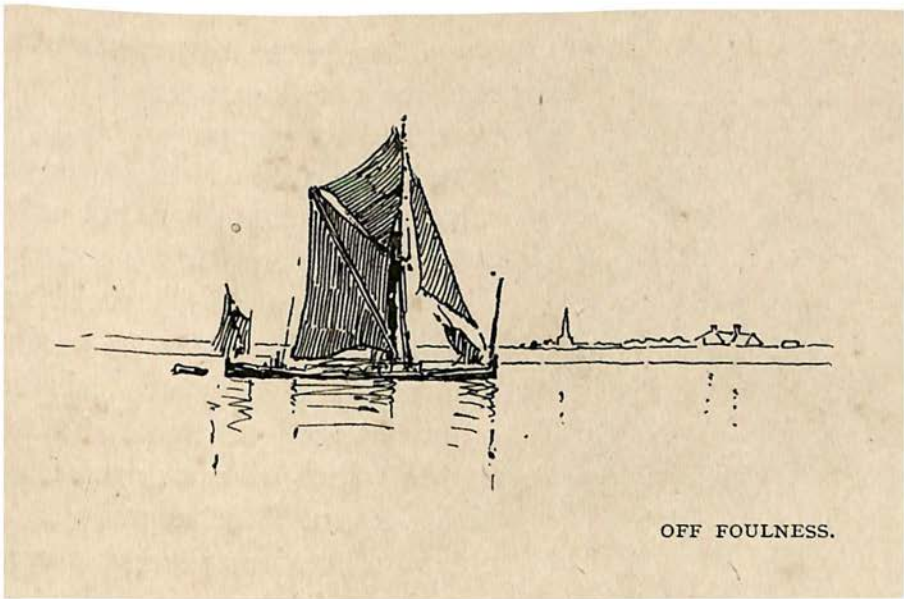
ISLAND STORIES

"May those already cursed Essexian plains

. . . . .

Prove all a desert, and none make there stay
But savage beasts, or men as wild as they!"

WALLER.

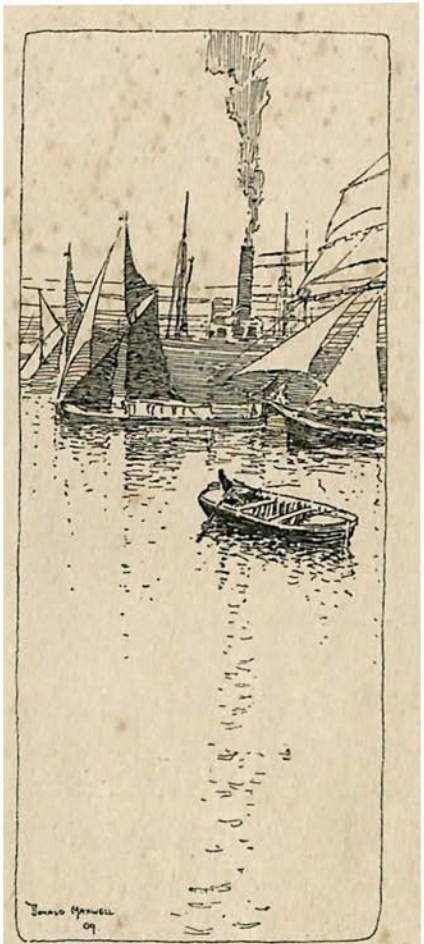


OFF FOULNESS.

ISLAND STORIES

ALTHOUGH it is in 1924 that I am getting together the sketches of Essex, my knowledge of the coast has been accumulating for many years. The two leading experiences being the voyage of the *Penguin* in 1907 and service during the war when I was in command of a patrol boat attached to *Actæon* and told off on a lone job known as *The Essex Coast Patrol.* This was generally a cold and messy occupation. We could go in waters too shallow for most naval craft, could cut corners and take most unorthodox routes over sandbanks. Even if we did not encounter many

German submarines, we were constantly being taken for one ourselves, and so life was very exciting in the intervals between extreme boredom. The job, however, had its compensations. We were often told off to take out salvage experts, to conduct extraordinary experiments connected with the location of submarines, and to keep in touch with various affairs on shore. It was this last item that brought much of Essex within radius of my sketch-book. Hole Haven, Shoeburyness, Foulness, and various places *en route* to Harwich became at times handy places for exploration when off duty or awaiting orders.



"IN 1884 WAS BUILT A LUG-BOAT."

At one spot we had to land sugar every month for the coast-guards. I never have been able to find out why this could not go in the ordinary way by road, but "ours was not to reason why," and in consideration of the fact that a whole troupe of land-girls used to help in this important part of the defence of the realm, nobody complained.

If you have read *Unknown Kent*, you will have come across

the *Penguin*. In case you have not, or in case you believe, as many do, that the *Penguin* is a myth or a literary property of my own manufacture, it will be necessary to give some account of her.

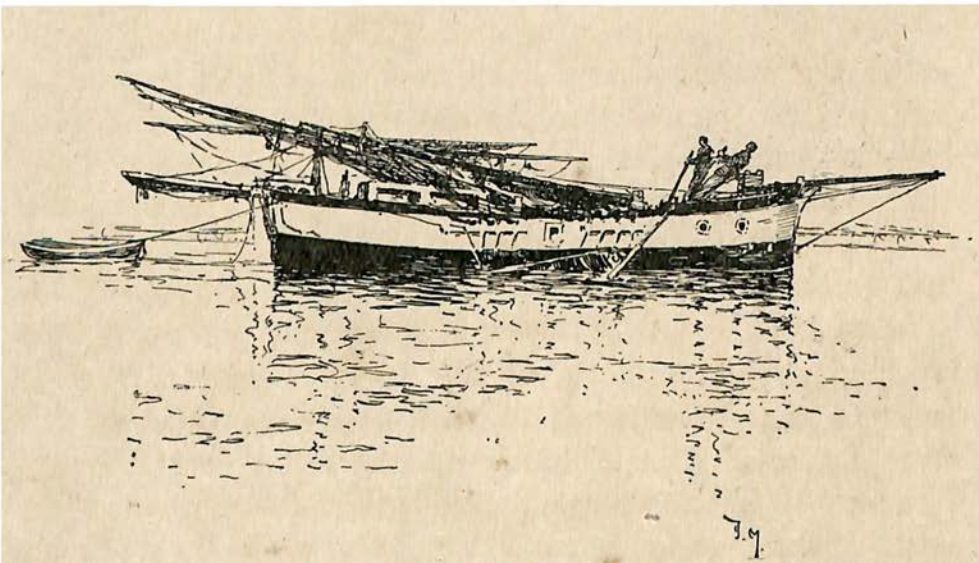
In 1884 was built a "lug-boat." She belonged to the West India Docks and was of good workmanship with grown oak timbers. Her general appearance as manœuvred by the 'prentices of those days, putting off with oddments or gear wanted at the last moment by ships about to sail, can be seen on page 80. In 1907 I wanted to build a fairly roomy boat for cruising, and I pitched on one of these lug-boats. The timbers of this particular one were surveyed and pronounced sound, and so I used them as a base on which to build up a barge-yacht.

THE *PENGUIN* "WAS THE JOKE OF RIVERSIDE LONDON."

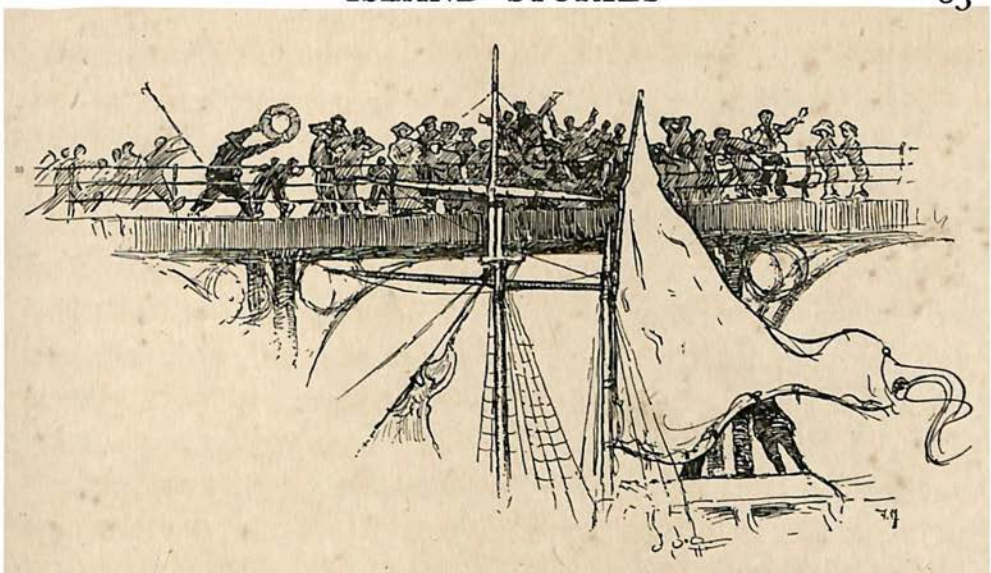
The firm of Sparkes of Limehouse fashioned her for me. She was the joke of riverside London, because I insisted on certain features, unusual in a craft of that size (about 25 tons). Not the least noticeable was her square rig forward. To

make a long story short, as the patent medicine copy-writer did when he condensed *Middlemarch* into a pamphlet, the *Penguin* cruised here, there, and everywhere. For years my wife and I lived in her, voyaging in the summer and mooring near Eel Pie Island in the winter. It is still a matter of controversy in the family as to whether this period was two or three years. I chivalrously maintain that it seemed only two years. On the other hand, my wife, who is a good wife but a bad sailor, sticks to it that it was actually three but that it seemed like twelve.

People said we were unpracticable. I will not admit this, however. We were intensely practical. I learned more of dawns and mists and reflections, of moving water and of



THE *PENGUIN* WITH TACKLE DOWN.



IN TROUBLE AT SHEERNESS PIER.

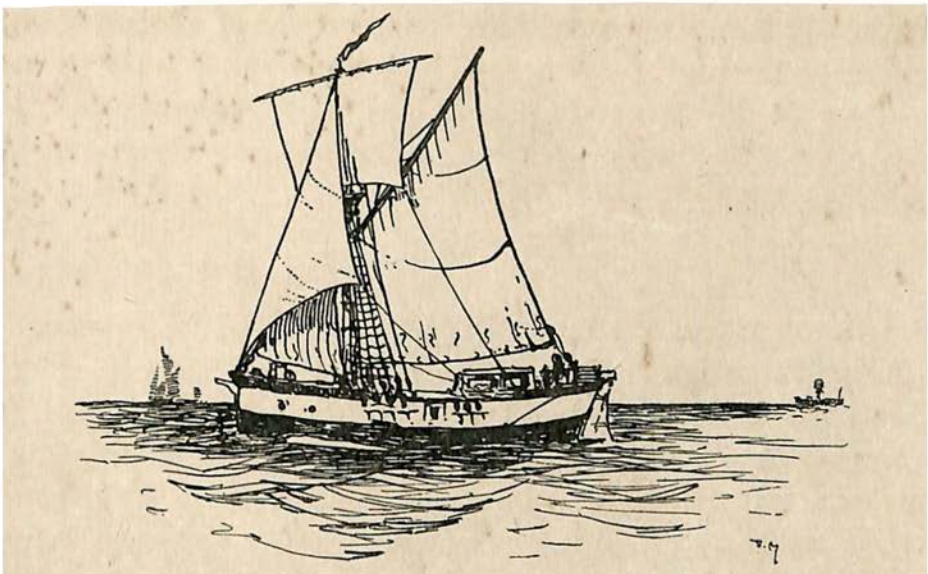
subtle lights than would have been possible in any other way—and to learn one's trade thoroughly is, after all, a most practical thing to do. Incidentally I learned something too of kedge anchors and lee shores and how to make up my mind quickly and to do the wrong thing instantly rather than hesitate. These things are allegories to the painter. It is better for him to get down his impressions on paper even if he puts that paper on the fire and starts again, than to mess about. Besides, knowledge and experience in any direction may be useful to the craftsman, whose motto should be " Jack of all trades and master of *one*."

I will not deal in this narrative with the cruising adventures of the good ship *Penguin*. Some fragments of

the story have appeared from time to time in various magazines. The impression that she did not really exist at all gained ground with those who had not seen her, and the most fantastic yarns were elaborated from mouth to mouth by those who had. Not the least amusing of these was the legend related from one imaginative fisherman who had been on board (fishermen were ever imaginative) to his less fortunate mates that the *Penguin* was fitted up in a most luxurious manner below deck and that we ate off gold plates. The objective reality of our good ship was vindicated on the publication by *The Yachting Monthly* of a photograph of her under sail, and my veracity for travellers' tales went up by leaps and bounds.

The appearance of the *Penguin* into these travels in Essex is necessary, as is some account of my patrol service during the war, to explain the pictorial side of this part of the book. You will notice that the sketches do not belong to one period, but are the result of the raiding of sketch-books for some years past. I think it is part of the duty of a wandering picture-maker engaged in topographical work like this to give some account of how the illustrations are arrived at. The interest of travelling by those who come after him are thus enhanced.

Some of the sketches here will interest the yachtsman, especially the week-end adventurer in a small craft, and he will recognize, with poignant memories, somewhat mellowed by time, the stark truth of the line drawing on page 87. It is a scene off Southend in the summer. The wretched



THE *PENGUIN* AT SEA.

people on board these craft, such as are inhabited, are doing this sort of thing for "pleasure." I once hoped to make this into a poster for the further advertisement of Southend, for it rubs in with great realism the fact, often doubted by rival watering-places, that it is indeed "on sea."

The manager of the publicity department, however, took the view that such a poster displayed upon the hoardings of London would have the effect of making all would-be holiday makers to Southend-on-Sea take long journeys into the Midlands. I did not think of it at the time, but what I ought to have done would have been to offer it to the Midland Railway. I was not, however, so enterprising in those

days. It is quite a good idea for a new kind of poster. It might be lettered:

WHY BE AN IDIOT?
OR,
IS *THIS* YOUR IDEA OF A HOLIDAY?
COME TO THE MILD MIDLANDS.

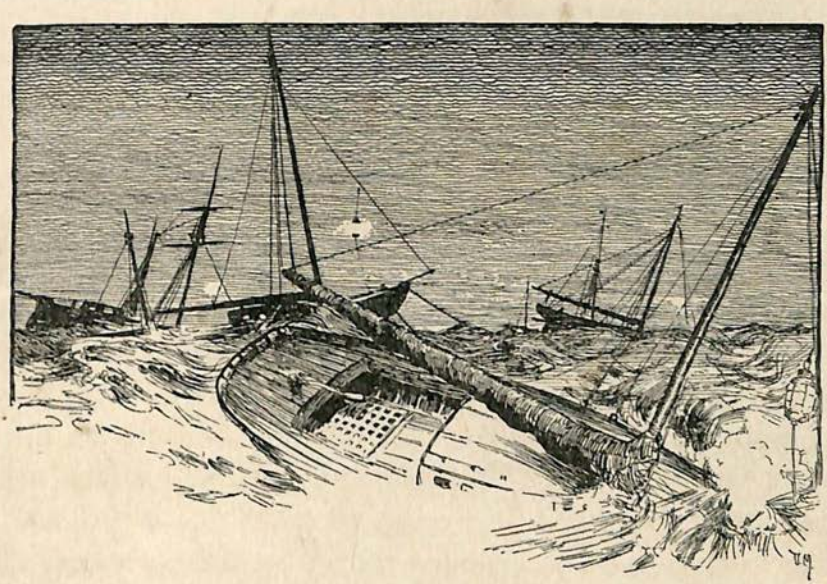
The notion is distinctly bright. I think I will approach the Northern lines with a series of pictures of places on the Southern Railway. One could be of Folkestone with a view of the Leas on which there are no pretty girls, but hideous frumps all moving about in the rain. Or there could be the depressing scene of a seaside landlady presenting a bill, full of terrific overcharges for bad accommodation, to the harassed father of a family.

Canvey Island, the first of the many islands of Essex, as we travel eastward, is mentioned by Ptolemy as Counos. It was not then walled in, and I should imagine, until the Dutch engineers took the matter in hand in 1622, that it must have been nothing more than a huge "salting," certain parts of which, to be discerned to-day, being ridges and mounds upon which cattle could take shelter from a high spring tide.

As in the corresponding Island of Sheppey on the Kentish side of the estuary, these mounds have caused a good deal of speculation. It was commonly said in Sheppey that these places marked the burial places of those who fell in the terrific combats between Saxons and Danes. That this is

absurd a little reflection and computation will demonstrate. If everybody in England had been buried there, this could not account for it.

The answer, I think, is to be found in the mud and saltings of the riverside in places not reclaimed. You will notice



HUMOROUS DRAWING TO DEMONSTRATE THE FACT THAT SOUTHEND IS SOMETIMES "ON SEA."

vast tracts of mud with here and there islands of marsh. Some time after writing on this subject in *Unknown Kent*, a reader wrote me a very interesting letter. He pointed out that these mud tracts with islands, although now completely covered, islands and all, by a spring tide, might be raised gradually by geological changes. Assume, therefore,

that the whole bed of mud and marsh was raised by 6 to 10 feet. You would then find a large piece of country that was never covered by the tide. It would gradually become pasture land and in it would be hillocks reaching some few feet above the surrounding level.

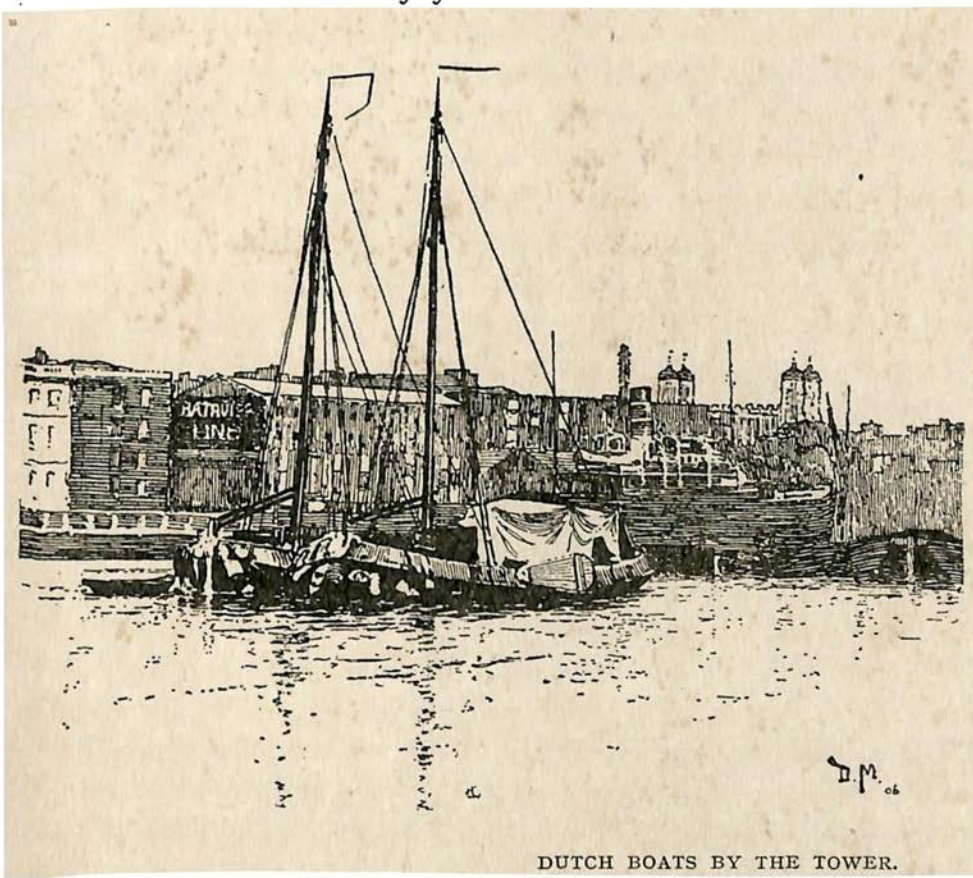
Even before the reclaiming of the land by means of a sea-wall, there must have been a considerable island of marsh. Like all these salt marshes, there would be excellent pasture for sheep, and here (according to Camden), as well as in Sheppey, the making of cheese from ewes' milk was a considerable industry.

The Mecca of the Thames estuary week-end sailor is Hole Haven. Here with a book of verse, a primus stove, and the Lobster Smack close at hand, a single-handed cruiser were paradise enow. There are nearly always Dutch eel boats lying in Hole Haven, and this bit of Holland in conjunction with the other Dutch reminiscences of the island needs some explanation.

The eels that form the live cargo in the holds of these schuyts are caught in the fresh-water rivers of Holland. If they were brought straight into salt water they would die, although after slow acclimatization they can live in either. Hole Haven is brackish and is a sort of halfway house between fresh and salt.

If you are a visitor to London and enterprising enough to hire a boat and explore our unnavigated Thames, unnavigated as far as pleasure is concerned, you will see at least one Dutch boat at Billingsgate. Generally there are

more schuyts, as at Hole Haven. I have shown here a sketch by the Tower to help you to spot them even if you are not afloat. Probably you will be able to see them from



DUTCH BOATS BY THE TOWER.

London Bridge. These are interesting from an historical as well as a pictorial point of view, for they lie there to keep alive certain rights granted to the Dutch by Royal Charter in

the reign of Charles II. So long as a Dutch craft lies in the London river, so runs the deed, these rights shall be inviolate.

It is not the Dutch craft alone that give a touch of Holland to Canvey Island. There are straight bits of road, and dyke-bordered fields, which are unmistakably Dutch. This marshy island was owned by one Appleton in the early seventeenth century, and in 1622 he made an agreement with a Dutchman named Croppenburg, an engineer "skilled in the making of dikes," to the effect that he would make one-third of the island over to Croppenburg in exchange for his labour and skill in enclosing it by a sea-wall. This "inned" area was 6000 acres in extent, and the wall stretched for twenty miles round. Many Dutchmen settled there, and it is said that they built a church. There is no evidence left of this, but two cottages, bearing the dates 1618 and 1621 respectively, are still to be seen.

From time to time fragments of Roman pottery have been found in Canvey Island. This is not thought to be any evidence of Roman occupation, however, and the explanation usually given is that these fragments have been washed there from the Roman pottery works on the Medway. This seems to me rather a tall proposition, and it would be far easier to account for their presence by supposing that now and then ships loaded with pottery on their way to London had been wrecked on the shores of Canvey.

In support of this theory, I can quote the famous instance of "pudding pan" off Whitstable. This is a shoal, and it obtained its curious name from its strange material.

A CREEK IN CANVEY ISLAND

Some antiquary, I don't know quite how long ago, was staying in Whitstable when he noticed a great many basins of undoubted Samian ware in various fishermen's cottages that he had visited. As these examples of ancient art are very valuable, and as the fishermen of Whitstable are not usually millionaires, he began making inquiries. The fact evolved that the oyster fishermen had from time to time dredged them up in their trawls, and it was a recognized thing that a small mountain of these existed off Whitstable, and that if you wanted a basin, it was to be obtained there cheaper than at Woolworth's. Some ship laden with pottery must have foundered many years ago at this point. It was not realized, however, that this ship was one bringing Samian ware from the Mediterranean in the days when the Cæsars held sway in these islands.

My memories of the *Penguin's* voyaging in these coasts is to some extent overshadowed by vivid pictures of Canvey and the Essex coast during the war. All the colour sketches here shown of Canvey were done when on patrol. We lived strenuous days and nights interspersed with sheltering from gales in Hole Haven and in some extreme cases at Gravesend. There was literally no shelter short of this in some winds. Taking a hand in air-raids or berthing torpedoed and sinking ships on Mucking Flats were among the varied calls upon our small craft.

The one and only social event in our long sojourns waiting for orders in Hole Haven was a visit to the gun station at Canvey. Many a black and stormy winter

evening, when the raging gale made naval and air activities equally impossible, we would march over, my gallant lieutenant, William P. Lynch of Toronto, and I, and hunt up the cheery gunner in charge of Canvey. His name is familiar enough now to Southenders and others in these piping days of peace and of political war—Douglas Young, who, as the Liberal candidate, contested the Southend constituency in December, 1923. It seems dim ages ago that we talked together on Canvey Island.

I remember once, during one of the daylight air-raids on London—happily one that was frustrated—that it was the Canvey gun that turned them. I could see as much from the estuary. My delighted crew, reckless of titles due to commissioned rank, danced in ecstasy and shouted, "Good old Young!"

A few days after this I was sent to Mesopotamia and the cheery gunner of Canvey Island became, like much else, a memory, one of the pleasantest memories of those stirring days.

Years rolled on and I found myself outside the offices of the *Sunday Times* in East Strand upon a dismal night in a dense fog, watching the fiery announcements of the fate of political parties. And I saw the number of them.

Suddenly Southend was announced. In spite of my political sympathies I hoped to see Douglas Young at the head of the poll. I was disappointed, however. From a majority of 6000 against him he had fought his way to within 150, and next time, though I am a mighty good Conservative, I hope he will pull it off.

A FARM BY CANVEY VILLAGE

After leaving Canvey Island it will be well to make a list of the islands of Essex in order to see where we are.

LIST OF THE ISLANDS OF ESSEX.

Canvey.	Mersea.
Potton.	Suntlen.
Havengore.	Cob.
New England.	Rat.
Rushley.	Cindery.
Foulness.	Hedge End.
Osea.	Horsey.
Northey.	Skippers.
	Pewit.

Besides these there are many islands *de facto* if not in name, such as Leigh Marsh and many known only to those brave spirits who explore them for the sake of bagging wild-fowl. The old chroniclers always take a most pessimistic and depressing view of these lonely spots, and speak of the scattered inhabitants as die-hard survivals, and specimens of an amphibious and particularly tough race who have neither died of ague nor been drowned by the frequent and persistent encroachments of the sea. The high-water mark, or the low-water mark of gloom is reached in a stanza by the poet Waller, lamenting the death of Lady Rich, who died in Essex.

"May those already cursed Essexian plains,
Where hasty death and pining sickness reigns,
Prove all a desert, and none make there stay
But savage beasts, or men as wild as they!"

I have sailed much among these little known shores, and although perhaps on a wet afternoon the pessimistic view can seem almost justified, in sunny and clear weather I can testify to the extraordinary charm of these island haunts with their wild life and flower-strewn marshland.

The Island of Foulness lies between the mouths of the Roche and Crouch. It is about twelve square miles in size. There is record of a chapel there shortly after the Conquest, and the island was formed into a parish in 1550. Of Foulness, as it is to-day, Walford writes (1882) :

"In Foulness Island in 1801 Lord Winchelsea's tenants reclaimed three hundred and thirty acres from the sea, on condition of having the land rent free for twenty-one years. The visitor will naturally feel the dreariness of this breath of grassy aguish level. In the centre stands a plain and desolate-looking church, erected in 1850, on the site of a chapel founded in the twelfth century. There are numerous saltings on the coast, and wildfowl abound here."

In the much earlier work, to which I have already referred, my friend the *New and Complete English Traveller* of 1794, the following note is interesting :

"At low water people can pass to Foulness Island on horseback, but many, by neglecting the proper time, have been drowned, so that in general they use a ferry-boat. It is an unhealthy, disagreeable place, and although the grounds have been drained in the same manner as in Holland, yet at spring-tides the sea breaks in and drowns many of the cattle."

"THE LOBSTER SMACK," HOLE HAVEN

Just north of the mouth of the River Blackwater, Walford (1882) writes of it :

" Mersea Island is well wooded and richly undulating, and rising with a bold abrupt coast from the restless waves of the North Sea, it presents many a charming bit for the sketcher's pencil. . . . The creek which divides it from the mainland is called the Pyefleet, and abounds in excellent oysters. A raised causeway, called the Strode, traverses this creek, and is passable at low water. The higher ground affords good arable and pasture land, but the marshes and saltings are usually inundated at high tide. Roman relics have been discovered here. The *tumuli* on the island appear to belong to the Brito-Roman period ; and a hill on the road to Colchester still bears the name of Roman Hill. It was a favourite asylum of the Norse Sea Rovers, and Alfred the Great, according to tradition, besieged and captured a large body of them here in 894."

There are two villages on the island—East Mersea and West Mersea. Kelly writes :

" Adjoining West Mersea churchyard is the site of an ancient Roman settlement, said to have been the residence of the ' Count of the Saxon shore.' In digging graves the sexton frequently meets with the remains of a tesselated pavement, which Dr. Stukely found to have enclosed a square, the side of which was about eighty yards in length ; this probably formed part of an ancient temple dedicated to the goddess Vesta."

Cook's *Topography* says :

" Near the east end of West Mersea church was a priory, which seems to have been founded previous to the Conquest, for Ethelfreda in 962 bequeathed lands to St. Peter's Church (Cyprian) at Mersea."

New and Complete English Traveller (1794) :

" Were Mersey Island properly fortified it might be made a place of great strength, and prevent our enemies in the time of war from landing on this part of the coast ; but this has been neglected ever since the reign of Charles II, when one thousand men were placed on it to oppose the Dutch, who were expected to come to an anchor here in order to plunder the neighbouring country."

There are some curious names in these shores of the estuaries. Beaumont-cum-Moze is one, and Kirby-le-Soken is another. The parishes of Thorpe, Kirby and Walton-on-the-Naze, together form " the Liberty of the Sokens." This sounds most depressing on a wet afternoon, but the Anglo-Saxon *soc* or *sok* means nothing more than special jurisdiction. Before the Reformation this jurisdiction was part of the spiritual realm of St. Paul's Cathedral, but Henry VIII laid hands upon it.

Edward Walford, writing forty-five years ago, describes Horsey Island and Walton-on-the-Naze in the following way. It is interesting to compare with its vogue to-day as a haunt of week-end yachtsmen, and holiday-makers by the sea.

" Rounding Horsey Island (Horsa-ey), a grazing ground,

A FRAGMENT OF HADLEIGH CASTLE

measuring two miles in length by one mile in breadth, and stretching into the open sea, we find ourselves within the shadow of the promontory of the Naze (or Ness) abruptly projecting its crumbling walls, rich in memorials of the Naze, is a frequent termination on this coast : it signifies a promontory (Lat. *Nasus* the nose). The entire promontory forms a peninsula of three miles in length and one mile in breadth, gradually declining in height as it approaches the mainland. On its loftiest point stands a brick tower, eighty feet high, built by Trinity House as a landmark for shipping, and commanding a varied and delightful prospect of cliff and sea, and village-spire and cattle-dotted pasturage. Great quantities of copperas are found upon the beach. There are decoys, after the Norfolk and Suffolk type, in one or two places on the coast : as at Goldhanger, near Maldon, and in Mersea Island."

"Walton-on-the-Naze is situated on the southern extremity of the peninsula, and from the admirable extent of its smooth sandy shore has obtained a fashionable reputation as a seaside resort and bathing-place. Facing the sea is a terrace of handsome houses enjoying that desideration of cockney's, 'a fine sea-view'; and a pleasant promenade is afforded by the wooden pier or jetty, erected in 1830, and extending 330 feet into the sea. There is also another pier, of more recent erection, upwards of 800 feet long. . . . The cliffs here are of moderate elevation, but frequent landslips are effected by the encroachments of the restless waters! They have advanced inland for instance, several hundred feet beyond the site of the ancient church."

Since these lines were written the sea's encroachments have gone on apace. At low tide the extent of them is apparent. I have never been able to determine which part of this shoal water is the site of the great Roman castle which once dominated the entrance to the Stour.

Before leaving these island shores I must work in two sketches of Hadleigh Castle, the dominating feature of the mainland visible from Canvey Island. I could not find room for them, when we were there in Chapter II. One shows a fragment of the castle and a distant glimpse of Canvey Island below. The other is drawn from the lane that leads down to the Salvation Army Labour Colony.

The striking ruins of Hadleigh Castle have formed the subject of one of Constable's pictures. "These ruins," wrote the famous landscape painter, "from their situation are vastly fine. They command a view of the Kent hills, the Nore and the North Foreland, looking many miles to sea."

This view has hardly altered at all since 1829, when this picture was painted, save for Southend and Leigh, grown up beyond recognition, and a few more houses scattered about the Canvey marshes. Constable's picture, when it was first exhibited, bore these very appropriate lines on the frame. They are from Thomson's poem *Summer* :

> "The desert joys
> Wildly, through all his melancholy bounds
> Rude ruins glitter; and the briny deep
> Seen from the pointed promontory's verge,
> Restless, reflects a floating gleam."

HADLEIGH CASTLE

The castle can be explored by anyone, though it is in the land belonging to the Salvation Army. In one thing it differs somewhat from the other famous Essex castle—Hedingham—for these riverside remains have no keep, and apparently have never had one, but the towers of the south-west and north-west corners are still standing, though somewhat battered by time and weather.

It is rather disappointing to find that Hadleigh Castle has very little history; one would like to hear of many brave assaults by knights and men-at-arms; the scene was set, but there were no actors.

The Castle was built about 1231 by Hubert de Burgh, Grand Justiciary of England, but soon after passed into the possession of the Crown. It was given by Edward I to his second Queen, Margaret. Edward III enlarged and partly rebuilt the castle and gave it to one of his sons. We hear little of it during the next two hundred years, when Henry VIII gave it to his divorced wife, Anne of Cleves. The last owner was Baron Rich of Leez, who had it in 1551; he apparently resided here but little, and allowed the place to fall into such disrepair that it soon afterwards became derelict. It was never rebuilt or repaired, and ever since that time it has gradually decayed to its present state.

In former times the ivy that covered the walls of Hadleigh Castle has a curious characteristic. "The great stems," says a writer some thirty years ago, "rooted to the ground, were severed many years since, and the masses of leafage now derive their whole support from the walls to which they

cling, in the crevices of which their 'claws' have developed into true roots." This ivy is no longer to be seen, but it has probably left a goodly legacy of damage. The recent archæological survey of Essex dealt with this interesting relic, and it has been deemed necessary that some strengthening of at least one of the towers is necessary as it is in some danger of falling.

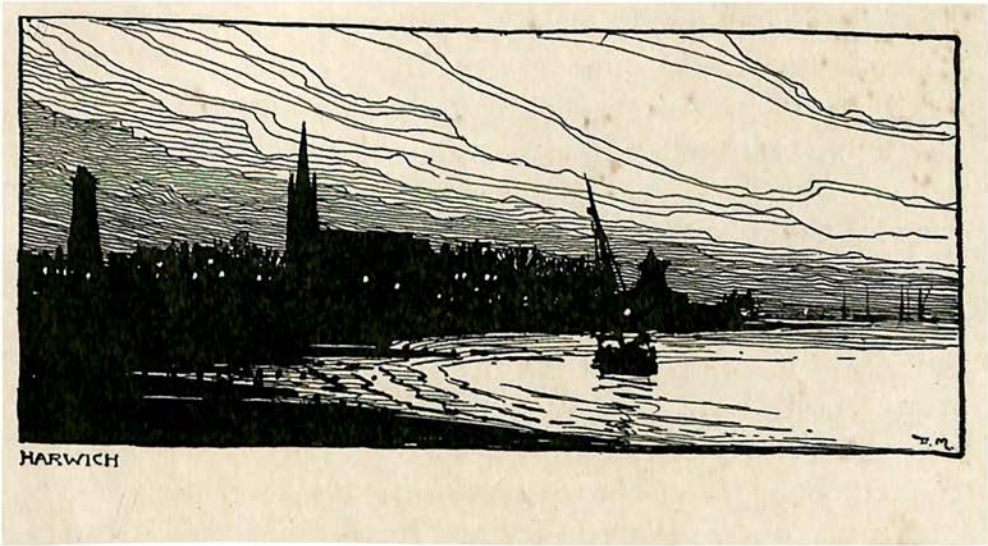
One more island story. On meeting a colleague of the R.N.V.R. the other day, I asked him to send me a note about Osea Island. I thought he knew something about the history of the Romans and the "Saxon Shore." Some time elapsed and then a characteristic scribbled-pencil letter arrived. It said: "Sorry, cannot find out anything about Osea Island, except that it was R.N.V.R. base during the war and contained a home for drunkards—no connection."

VII

THE LEGEND OF "THE THREE CUPS"

"Then by some secret shrine I ride;
I hear a voice, but none are there;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
The tapers burning fair.
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chaunts resound between."

TENNYSON: *Sir Galahad.*



HARWICH

THE LEGEND OF "THE THREE CUPS"

UPON an evening in December, when the wind is in the north-east and when the ocean is grey and the sky leaden, the North Sea is not attractive. When, in addition to these cheerless circumstances, it surrounded me when I was single-handed in a small yacht at night-fall, still many miles from safety, the chances of a comfortable time seemed very remote. I could not boil a kettle and the prospect of lying at anchor until daylight was purgatorial.

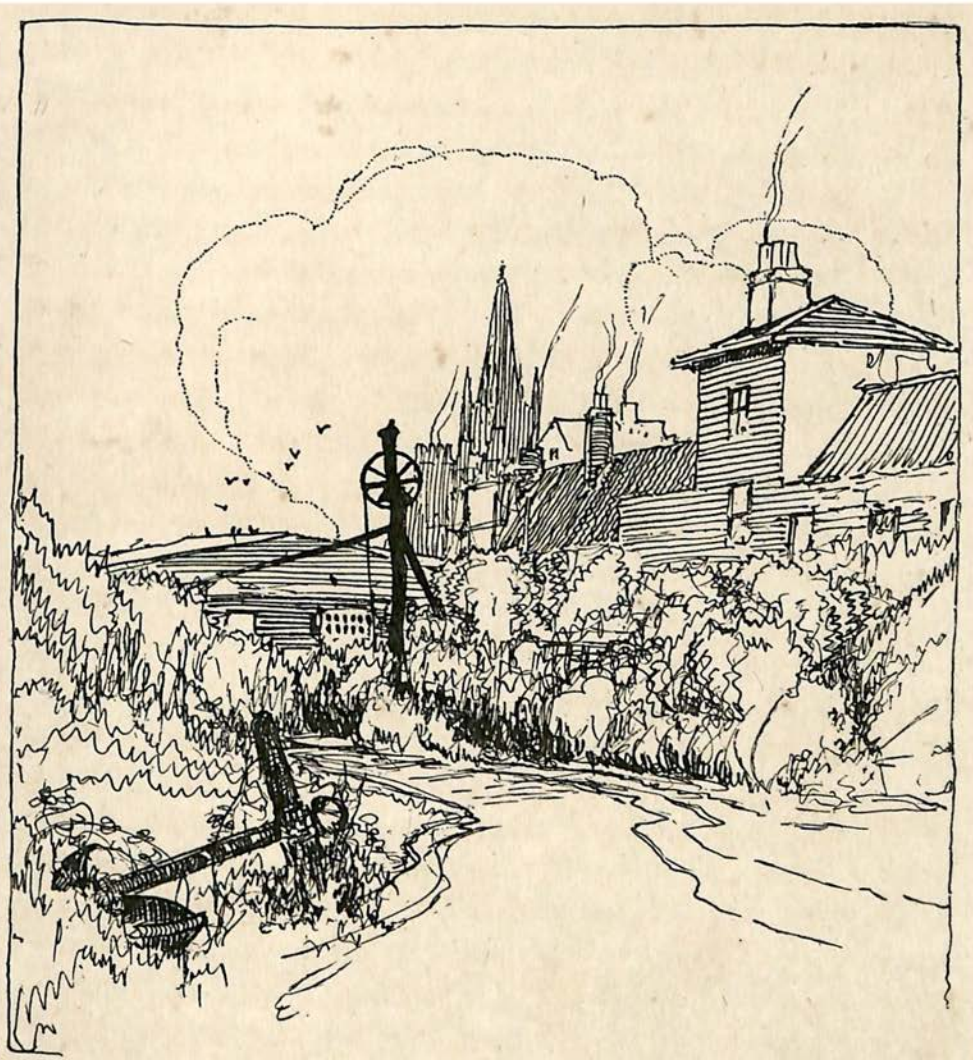
I had done a somewhat foolish thing in trying to bring a yacht from Lowestoft to Harwich without any assistance, but

as most of the way I was to have a tow by a trawler, and as time was pressing, I thought I would risk it. With a wind like this, I could easily make the Stour when I cast off somewhere between Felixstowe and the Naze.

Everything went according to programme, but after I had let go and made sail several unrehearsed episodes caused delay. The wind had freshened considerably, and I was carrying far too much sail, but being single-handed I shirked taking in a reef. Soon the gaff carried away and I hove-to wallowing in a sea-way until I had made good. This all took time and I feared I might not make the entrance to the river before the tide was heavily against me. Late, however, as it was, I forged ahead over the ebb I could see that I was going to do it, the lights of Harwich heralding a safe anchorage.

It was slow work, wet work and heavy work, wind against tide and a short fierce sea. At last I was in and I took the mud not far from Harwich church upon that bit of shore where the "low-light" stands; that curious survival, once a light-house, now a shelter. I was in no mood for another night on board, so I stowed everything, put up a riding-light, threw some clothes into a bag and waded ashore, the tide having ebbed sufficiently to allow me to do so. Being the evening of December 5th, the temperature of the water although higher than I had expected to find it, was sufficiently low to make me vow to do no more single-handed winter cruising, whatever the pictorial possibilities might be.

The shore was deserted. It would not be likely that any one would be about in such cold weather. Against the sky



"THE WORLD FORGETTING, BY THE WORLD FORGOT."

I could see the dim outline of another lighthouse, now dark like the shelter, once the "high-light" which gave a bearing for the entrance, when seen in line with the "low." The gaunt tower of the church loomed up against a rushing mass of clouds that portended snow before the morning.

I sat down in the shelter, put on my shoes and socks and took stock of my position. There were a few lights in the dark mass of houses across the green, and I judged that I was not very far from warm fires and hospitable inns.

As I approached what I thought was the opening to a road or alley, I became aware of a dark figure just in front of me. It was that of an old man in a dress that suggested a pilot. He greeted me and we spoke of the weather and of the chances of snow, and as we walked along together I asked him where he would advise me to put up for the night.

"The Three Cups," he said, stopping and pointing to a lighted window. "It is next to the church. I will show you the way."

I thanked him and again we walked along together. He was a curious figure and his white beard and venerable demeanour made me think what a good model he would make for St. Peter, the pilot of the Galilean lake, who "shook his mitred locks and stern bespake."

Through a narrow street we entered into a paved court, over which, upon a kind of trellis, there climbed a gigantic clematis. A welcome light streamed out, chequering the flagstones at our feet. Through the window I could see a

roaring fire and a glimpse of warmth and comfort that made me very glad I was not still upon the sea.

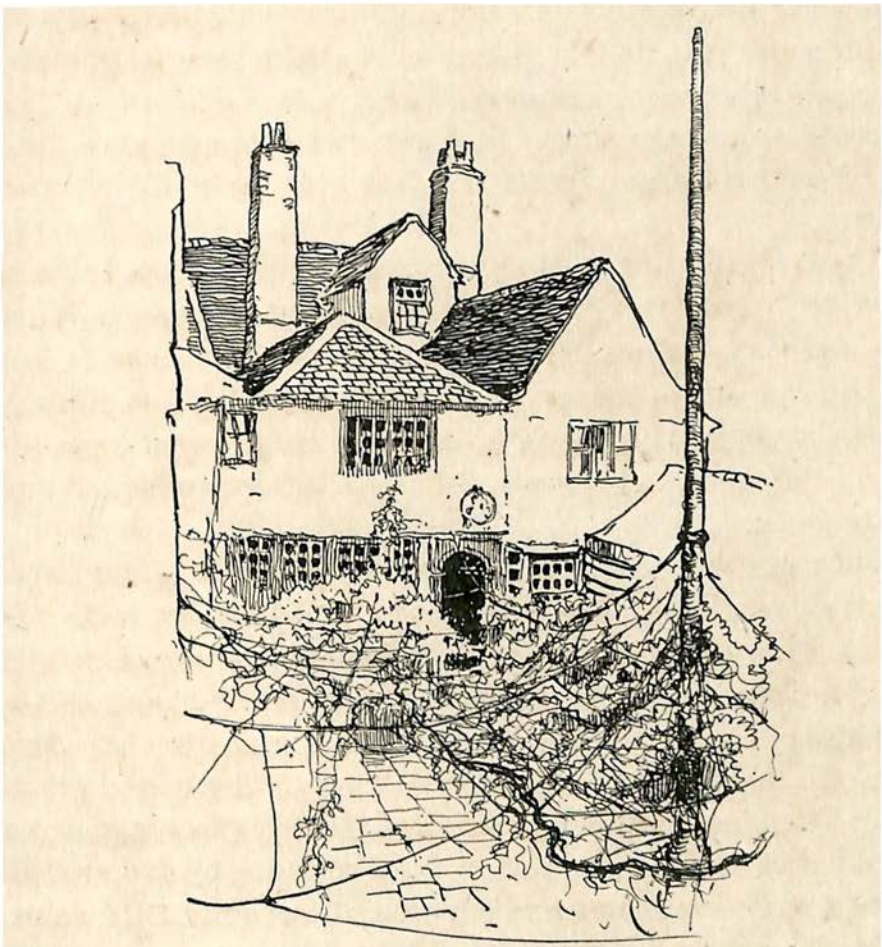
I turned to thank the old man for his courtesy and to invite him to come inside, when I found that he had gone. I went back to the entrance of the courtyard, but no one was in sight. I could have sworn that he had entered the courtyard with me, but I had evidently been mistaken.

I am not superstitious, but I felt there was something strange in the sudden advent of the old man out of the darkness and his equally sudden disappearance. A hot bath, however, and the genial hospitality of mine host of "The Three Cups" soon put the incident out of my head and I began to realize as I got through a prodigious supper how wet and cold and miserable I must have been.

A BACK STREET IN HARWICH.

Although I had often been to the Continent *via* Harwich in the days before the war and had often been into Harwich on naval occasions during the war, I had never seen the town at all, so before turning in I went for a stroll through the quaint streets and quays of the old town.

It was very dark. One of the two unlighted lighthouses, the tall one, dominated a street like a ghostly sentinel. Out



THE COURTYARD OF "THE THREE CUPS."

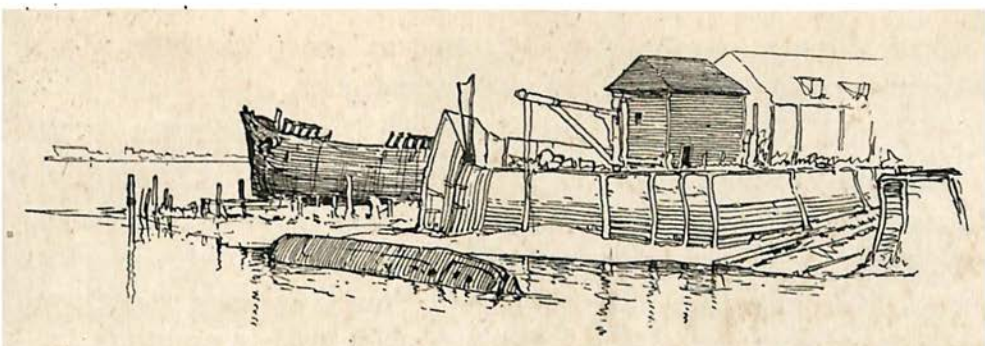
in the river, over towards Parkeston, lay three lightships under repair, and there was another alongside the quay by the

Train Ferry. Both lighthouses and lightships gave darkness rather than light, and all Harwich seemed to be under a black spell. Its narrow ways were dimly discerned, its windows were for the most part unlighted and where an occasional glimmer shows ghostly images of houses, the shadows were the deeper by contrast and the silence of night was supreme, save for a moaning in the wind across the dark reaches of the Stygian Stour.

I passed three doors, the most curious three doors I should think to be found anywhere (I have sketched them on page 113) and then a place labelled "Naval Yard," though it was a ghostly place not known to the Navy of to-day. A slipway was overgrown with clematis, anchors were buried in weeds and a bell, gaunt and neglected-looking, never summoned any one to work.

Time was when this was a place of ship-building and naval activity, now leased I believe from the Admiralty, who still own it, by a firm for the purpose of repairing lightships and other vessels, but the resuscitation of so small a part of the activities of such a place serves to make it more desolate than ever. In the daytime, across a wilderness of decay and grass-grown litter, hammering proceeds and ghostly noises suggesting that a few of the old-time workers have been dug up and are still doomed to do something and to potter about amidst the ruins.

At the corner, on the waterside, standing away from the yard by some fifty feet, is a hulk, and by this, half in the water and half out, is another derelict adding to the desolate look of the foreshore.



THE CORNER OF THE OLD NAVAL YARD AT HARWICH.

The shed on the quay contains a double wheel worked by man-power, for working the crane. It is a very rare survival. As far as I know there are only two examples of this "machine" in England—one which I have sketched in *Unknown Kent*, at Great Culand Farm, Burham, near Rochester, the other in Carisbrooke Castle. These two are wheels for the purpose of drawing water.

Regaining the light and cheerful fireside of "The Three Cups" I sat and talked with mine host for awhile, and he tells me, what I much want to know, what he considers is the origin of the sign and how "The Three Cups" came to be.

The Church of St. Nicholas and "The Three Cups" often, he says, go together. And he tells me that the usual explanation of the sign is that it is a corruption of "The Three Purses," which is one of the most common symbols of St. Nicholas. He maintains that it is held by many that

these three purses (golden bags tied at the neck) have been turned upside down—hence the present sign.

I take this with a grain of salt, as it seems very strange that this mistake can have been made in so many cases, but I am bound to admit that no one seems to have any other explanation of the association of the three cups with the saint who is no less than our old friend Santa Claus, the patron saint of travellers, sailors, children and dowerless maidens.

The purses appeared in this way. Santa Claus or St. Nicholas was a real person, Bishop of Myra, in Asia Minor.

A certain nobleman, it is recorded, had fallen upon evil days, and had become so impoverished that he had no dowry for his three daughters and it looked as if they would come to dire misfortune. The good bishop hears of their distress, however, and goes secretly to the nobleman's house, placing a purse of gold into an open window. Suitors are immediately forthcoming and one of the daughters marries "well." Again St. Nicholas places another purse of gold in the open window and the second daughter marries. On the occasion, however, of placing the third purse in the window, to enable the third daughter to marry, he is seen and the story of his good works spreads throughout the land. Thus the three purses became the chief symbol of St. Nicholas.

And so to bed, mine host lighting the way.

"You see," he says, "your room contains a portrait of St. Nicholas," and he pointed to a curious old picture not unlike an ikon. "You are in luck to-night for to-morrow is

A BREEZE AT WALTON-ON-THE-NAZE

the Feast of St. Nicholas. Good night and may the Saint preserve you."

I bade him good night and then when he had gone took a candle and looked again at the picture.

The face was familiar, St. Nicholas according to the artist

THREE DOORWAYS IN OLD HARWICH.

was not at all unlike the old pilot who had shown me the way to " The Three Cups."

I suppose I soon dropped off to sleep. From my bed I could see the part of the overshadowing tower of the Church of St. Nicholas. A thin layer of fine snow was outlining

cornices, and the tracery of a window; I noted the chime at half-past ten.

* * * * *

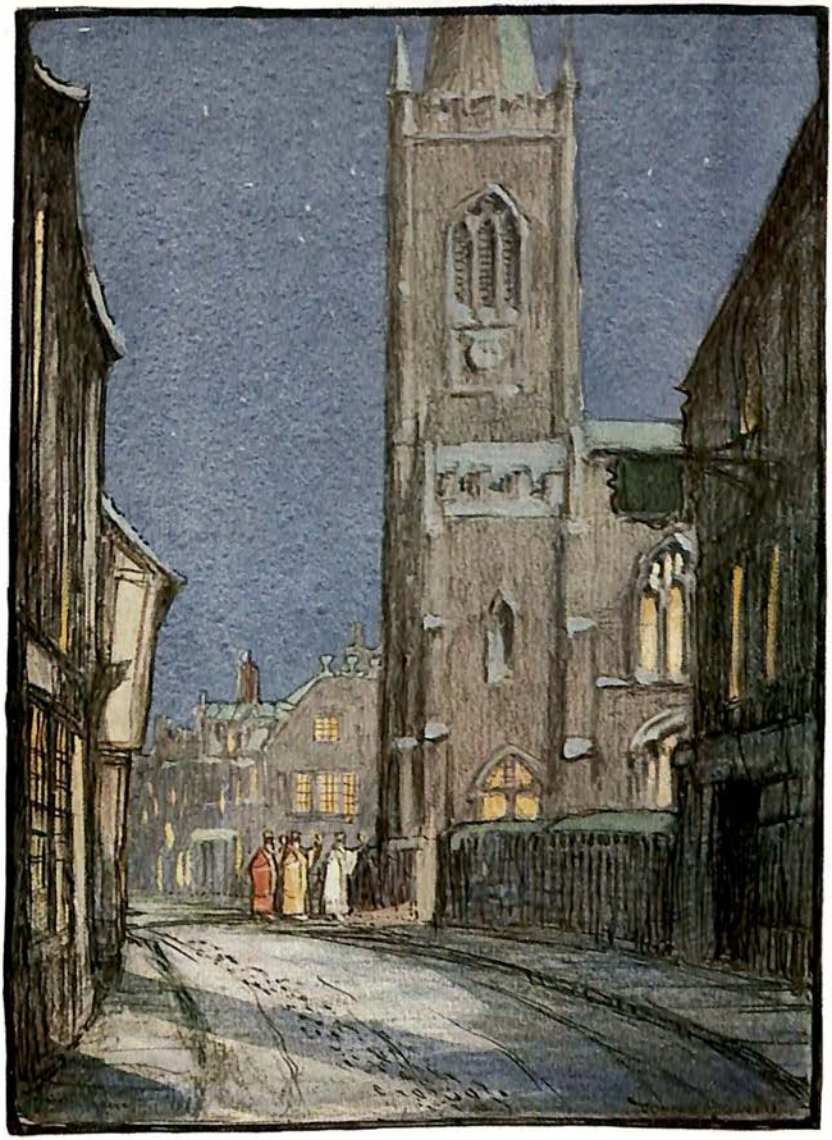
It was three o'clock. I heard the hour strike. Darkness had given place to light. White roofs and glittering gables gleam under the moon riding high in cloudless blue.

The whole town seemed to be awake. There were lights in the windows and lights in streets. I leaped out of bed and went to the window—the window that looks out upon the church. There was a light upon the roof—a man with a lantern standing upon the parapet looking towards the river and waving it to and fro as if to signal. It was a familiar figure, the old pilot of last night and St. Nicholas, good St. Nicholas, the friend of sailors.

And I saw three ships come sailing in, upon the flood tide, into the Stour and into the harbour of Harwich.

I was soon dressed and running up the street towards the quay. The river, so dark and dead last night, was alive with craft. The lightships were blazing and revolving, the lighthouses shining their beams across the water. In every window of every house lamps were lit and tapers fair, as if to welcome guests of honour as they pass through the streets.

And the people looked out of the windows but all was silent, for a great light came from the harbour where the three ships lay. And there came three Kings and each carried a golden cup and they went through the streets till they came



THE LEGEND OF THE THREE CUPS

to the Church of St. Nicholas. And the first of the King's wore a vesture of white, and the second of the King's wore a vesture of gold and the third of the King's wore a vesture of red, and they had crowns upon their heads and carried the golden cups before them. And they stood before the door of the church and entered in.

* * * * *

Now when they knelt before the altar to worship Him, who is the King of Kings, and to share the Sacred Feast, the priest who was before the altar took the golden chalice and with it touched the cups of the Kings.

And the three Kings bowed low and went forth from the church and into the inn. And in the cup of the first King was poured forth wine to all who should receive it. And the wine of that cup was white as crystal. And in the cup of the second King was poured forth wine to all who should receive it. And the wine of that cup was golden. And then in the cup of the third King was poured forth wine to all who should receive it. And the wine of that cup was red. And the people of the inn and of the town drank of the wine and made merry, and rejoiced because the Kings had come to Harwich.

And I sought the Pilot and beseeched him that he would interpret to me the mystery of the cups, and he made clear the parable.

"In the cups are the Wine of Life. And that which is white is Truth, and that which is golden is Power, and that

which is red is Love. And because the Kings have come to Bethlehem the wine which they carry has become precious and because their cups have touched the sacred Cup upon the altar all wine in the inns of the town and of this land has become sacred to men of good will. And he who drinks of the wine that is white, shall know of Truth. And he who drinks of the wine that is golden, shall know of Power. And he who drinks of the wine that is red, shall know of Love. For the King has come, that we shall have life, and have it more abundantly."

But these were difficult sayings, and I besought the Pilot that he should tell me how came the Kings of the East to Harwich, for Harwich lies not upon the way to Bethlehem; and why do they come so far?

Then the Pilot smiled and said: "Know you not that all places are upon the Way to Bethlehem?"

Then I understood the saying, and I knew who were the Kings. For they that seek shall find, and they that are true men are become priests and kings in the City of God.

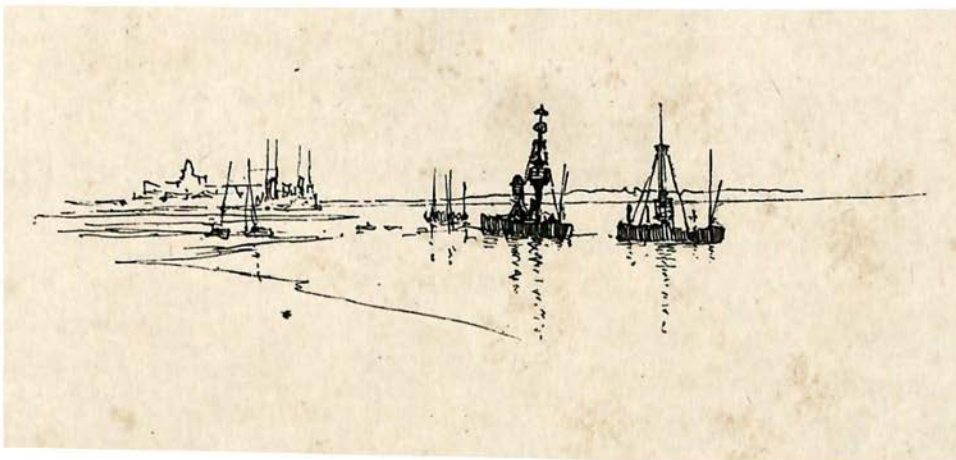
* * * * *

The clock struck nine, I awoke and looked out of the window, a cloak of snow was over everything in Harwich. I was soon out and walking down the road towards the harbour. Then I remembered my dream, suddenly, for it had gone from me.

There were the lightships out in the river, a cluster of them dark and forsaken; and there was the tall lighthouse,

seen down the street, showing no signs of having shown a light for many a long year, and the low light equally dark and of no account to navigation, looking out upon the water like a blind man who sits beside the highway. A few turns brought me back to the road by the church, and there before me was the scene of my vision of last night, the very place where I had seen the Three Kings, vested in white and gold and red, entering the church. And there—I had not noticed them before—upon the parapet of the hotel were the three cups each with a foaming top of snow.

So now, whoever you may be, when you go to Harwich and see this sign, think of good St. Nicholas and learn to drink well and wisely of the wine of life.



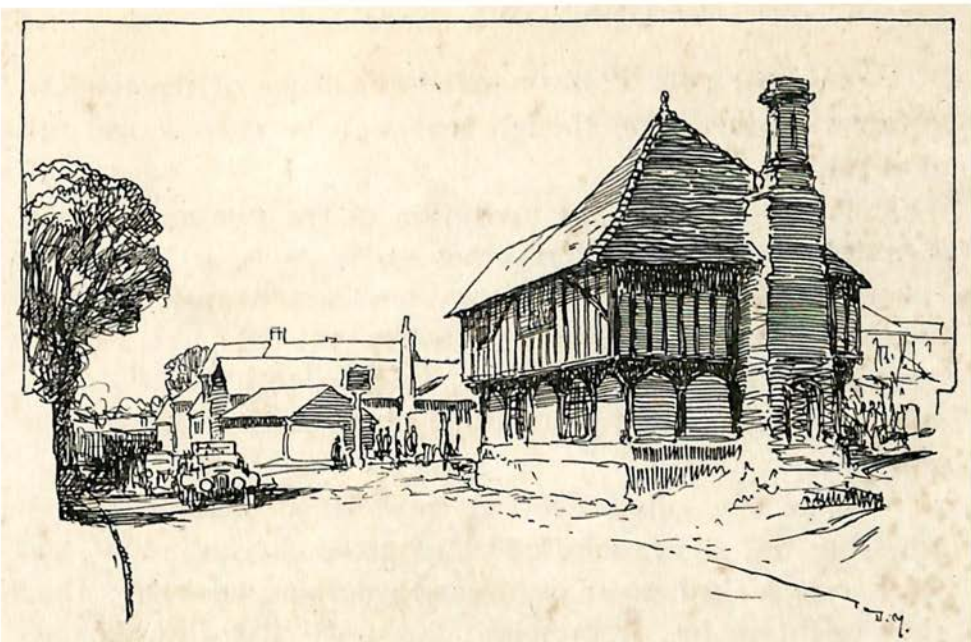
AT THE BACK OF "THE THREE CUPS."

VIII

ARCHÆOLOGY WITHOUT TEARS

" For age, long age,
Nought else divided us from the fresh young days,
Which men call ancient."

LEWIS MORRIS.



THE MOOT HALL, HELIONS BUMPSTEAD.

ARCHÆOLOGY WITHOUT TEARS

MOST people imagine that archæology must be exceedingly dull. It consists in discussing the pros and cons of matters which, to the average man, do not matter, and its solemn outings are visualized as the gathering together of a number of elderly gentlemen in a field, where they debate with great earnestness whether a certain uninteresting bump of earth was thrown up by Farmer Giles or by the Ancient Britons. I thought so myself once, but since the delightful day's ramble of which I am writing I have been converted, and now, like all converts, proclaim to my more benighted

brethren among the Philistines the excellence of the road to antiquarian salvation, though that way be narrow and full of old stones.

Before I accepted the invitation of the two antiquarian societies who were to foregather on a day's archæological excursion, a friend, who knew my tendency to rush in where angels fear to tread, implored me not to praise the picturesqueness of ivy on old buildings, as ivy did damage, loosened stones, encouraged damp and generally behaved as the villain of the piece.

Artists' are often accused, my friend maintained, of admiring the picturesque effect of green-covered walls, and thus were looked upon by archæologists as no better than they ought to be. I promised faithfully that I would look the other way if I saw so much as one leaf of ivy, at least not being what the law calls an accessory after the fact.

The day came, and we gathered together in a place rejoicing in the name of Helions Bumpstead. As a guest of honour (they did not know how little I knew about archæology !) I was conducted by the two heads of the societies present to the old church, concerning which a lecture was to be delivered. As we drew nearer I was horrified to behold ahead of us an ivy-mantled tower.

To my astonishment everybody said how picturesque it was, and from that moment I felt that these great minds were those of quite genial human beings like myself. This augured well, and so to Steeple Bumpstead, where the hospitable doors of Moynes Park were thrown open to us.

A·PICNIC·IN·MOYNES·PARK.

The inhabitants of all the Bumpsteads came out in force to see us go by. They all felt that something very important was being done for them. I think perhaps they would be a little bit vague if asked quite what it was that we *were* doing, except driving about in cars and brakes from place to place. However, we were cheered once—we tried to look very impressive. I hope we did, but it was difficult to judge of the effect from " the stage."

The name, Helions Bumpstead, is an intriguing one and sounds like a coined word especially chosen to sound like the heart of rural England. On looking it up, I find that it derives its name from a follower of William the Conqueror, one Tihel or Tihellus Brito, who held it at the Domesday Survey.

This explains in some way the Helions part of it, but the meaning of Bumpstead is still enshrouded in mystery.

I have sketched here the scene of our alfresco luncheon under the trees, with the old mansion beyond. We then trekked off in brake and car into Suffolk. Short lectures kept us informed at different points. A touch of humour, unconscious, on the part of its originators, consisted in the fact that we often assembled in some building to hear a long lecture on something which was outside, and which, when we left to continue the itinerary, there was no time to see !

The last item on the programme of this delightful day's adventure was a visit to Clare Priory, which I have sketched here, a delightful garden of ruins, crowned and dominated by the remains of a castle. Here we had tea and lectures, and

learned incidentally—those of us who, like myself, did not know it already—the origin of the name *claret* on the wine-list. The Lord of the Manor of Clare had vineyards in France, and the wine shipped to this place (for Clare was then open to navigation for sea-going ships by means of the Stour) was known as the wine of Clare and nicknamed *clarette*.

Lector: This is all very interesting and amusing from your point of view, but as Clare is in Suffolk I do not see quite why you are bringing it into *Unknown Essex*.

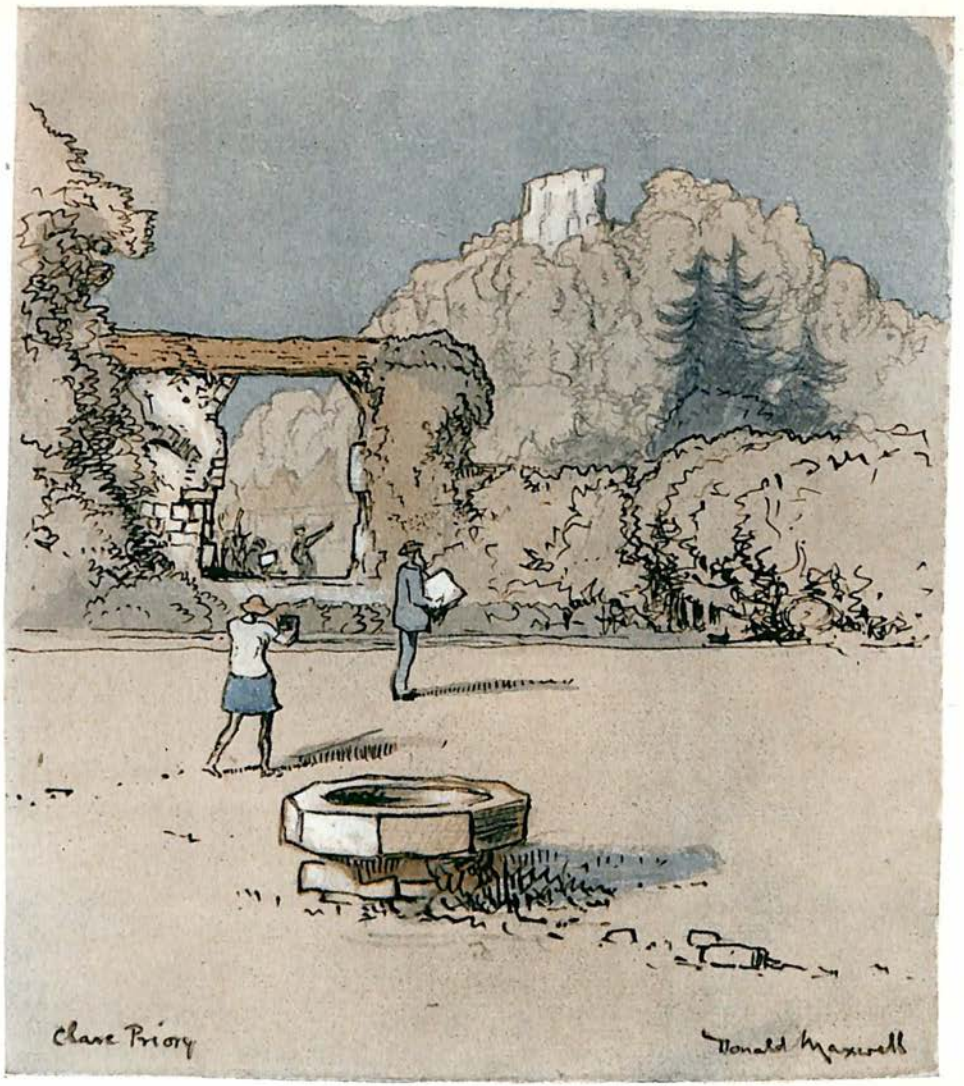
Pictor: My dear lector, I thought I would catch you. I have been keeping Clare until you began to grumble.

Clare was always in Suffolk, but the River Stour has changed its course somewhat. The garden in which we have foregathered and the Priory *was* in Essex and the Stour divided it from the town of Clare. Thus, it is a most legitimate find for *Unknown Essex*.

I was very much interested in two points that arose in our discussions upon various problems presented to us. One was the remarkable fact that churches which had been famous, almost notorious, as outposts of "sound" or advanced Puritanism, were often the ones in which the best mediæval and pre-Reformation relics were preserved. It seemed strange to find such evidences of "popery" under the eyes of so protestant a patron or incumbent.

Yet a little reflection, not upon archæology, but upon human nature in general, will supply an explanation to the mystery.

The violent objection that the iconoclasts had to "images"



IN THE GROUNDS OF CLARE PRIORY

was that they were regarded as "idols." In a case of such good protestants as these, the suspicion never arose and thus the mobs which were incited to tear down the images of the ungodly and the idols in which men of Belial put their trust, did not materialize, and the Lord of the Manor was not going to tolerate people interfering with his well-appointed church.

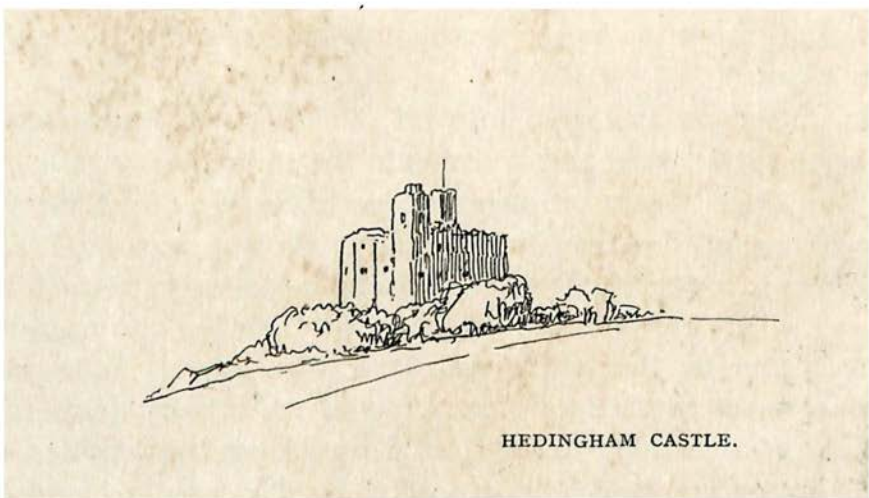
The other point was one of date controversies. In the grounds of Clare Priory is a tomb alleged to be that of Joan of Acre, daughter of Edward I. She died in 1307, and thus her tomb would be in the style of early fourteenth-century work. A famous archæologist, however, has pronounced that the tomb is undoubtedly late fourteenth-century work. This would seem at first sight to demolish the claim that family tradition has always maintained, namely, that this tomb is hers!

An ingenious apologia, however, for the traditional story has been put forward and it seems to me to be a very reasonable pleading. When we say that workmanship of a thing is early fourteenth century, what exactly do we mean? That such work is commonly found to belong to the early fourteenth century. But there must have been a time when any change or alteration in the traditional style was novel. Someone must have set the fashion before it was universally adopted.

Now what is most likely that the work on the tomb of a king's daughter, would be executed by the most advanced craftsmen, the very men who would set the pace for the various guilds to copy. In that case work which was novel and advanced in the early fourteenth century might not be general

till much later, and thus an isolated example of it would always be pronounced as much later than it really was, unless there was some very definite evidence of its date.

I do not think, from a point of view of enjoyment, exact knowledge of the date of a work of art is necessary. I remember admiring an old roof very much, but an acquaintance of mine who was very learned in these matters found out that it was some eight years later in date than he had thought was the case. As it must have been put up many centuries ago, I did not feel that it mattered very much, but my friend was quite depressed about it for the rest of the day and did not seem able to find any beauty in it at all.



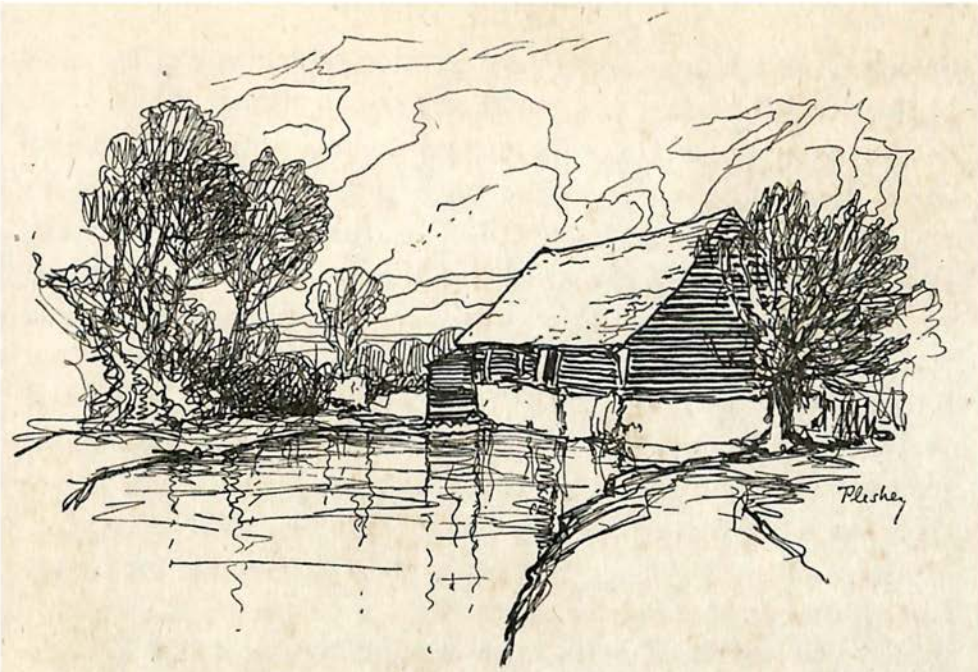
HEDINGHAM CASTLE.

IX

THE MOATED VILLAGE

"Bid him—O, what?—
With all good speed at Pleshey visit me.
Alack! and what shall good old York there see,
But empty lodgings and unfurnish'd walls,
Unpeopled offices, untrodden stones?
And what hear there for welcome, but my groans?"

Richard II., Act 1, Scene 2.



A BARN ON THE MOAT,
PLESHEY.

THE MOATED VILLAGE

IT would be untrue to say that the artist's lot, like the policeman's, is not a happy one. Yet it is often a very difficult one, and in those realms where the artist and the journalist tread on common ground problems sometimes have to be faced that would have appalled Leonardo da Vinci and made Turner commit suicide. I was once asked to make a drawing of Blythe Market Square that should look picturesque. Well, if you know Blythe you will see the joke. I got out of it as best I could by taking refuge in

darkness and lamps and every artifice which could be used to show Blythe when you could not see anything of it.

An even worse thing happened to me some three years ago. It was during the time when mysterious interferences had been felt at various wireless stations in Great Britain and elsewhere, and the startling theory had been adopted by some newspapers that possibly the planet Mars was trying to signal to the earth. The possibility of these interferences coming from outside our world had been admitted as just possible by Signor Marconi, but I do not think any scientist thought seriously about anything happening other than electrical disturbances somewhere in the solar system.

Journalism, however, is supposed to reflect life, not control it, and so the irresponsible chatter of people who maintained the people of Mars were making frantic S.O.S.'s made columns of reading. Mars was at its brightest and at its least distance from the earth. People, as they returned from town to their suburban homes, gazed wonderingly at the red planet blazing in the night sky. Children looked out of the window as they went to bed and listened to catch any signalling going on, for they had heard it discussed by their elders.

In the middle of all this speculation I received a telegram from the editor of the *Graphic*, and in a few hours had reported ready for duty.

"I want you," he said, "without committing yourself or the *Graphic* to any theory about these mysterious signals, to do a double-page sketch for the centre of the paper, and I shall want it at ten o'clock to-morrow."

CHELMSFORD: THAWING SNOW AND THE BRIDGE OVER THE CHELMER

By the time I had done gasping for breath the editor had settled down to the next job and I knew it was no use arguing. That drawing would have to be done, but how on earth I could draw wireless disturbances coming from Mars or anywhere else I had not begun to get any glimmering of an idea. The word "impossible" must never be used anywhere near Fleet Street, and so I repaired to Liverpool Street Station, took a ticket to Chelmsford, which was the nearest big wireless station I could think of, and hoped that light might dawn as I travelled thither on a dull and miserable winter day.

Some hope began to grow when I saw the wireless station. The giant masts with their multitudinous wire stays, the medley of blocks and insulators, and the great concrete anchors (one of which shows on the left-hand side of the sketch) gave promise of something mysterious in its suggestion. By dragging in Mars and the moon I might succeed in giving an impression of something eerie going on in the night. At least here were the *dramatis personæ* of all this sensation. I would wait for moonrise.

It was not long after noon, however. A few inquiries from a local taxi-man as to sights in the neighbourhood, and he volunteered to drive me to Pleshey. "There ain't nothing to see there, sir," he said, "but a lot of old houses, with a ditch all round them." The distance—eight miles—was satisfactory to the taxi-man and the probability that this place was evidently not much exploited was highly satisfactory to me, and so we struck up a bargain. And that is how I came to "discover" the moated village of Pleshey.

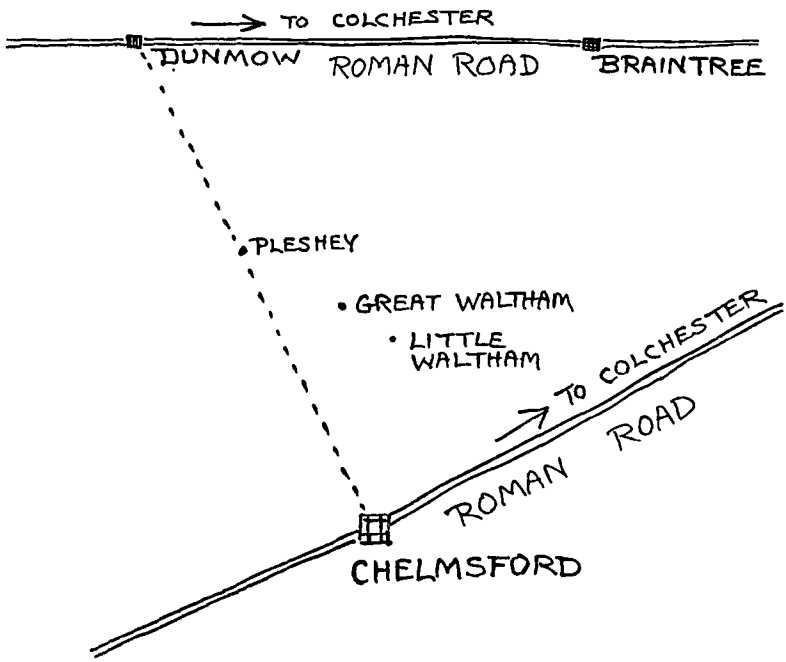
The road to Pleshey lies through Great Waltham, a place in itself worth some study, and unless you are very alert you will find yourself within the moated village before you

PLESHEY CHURCH.

are aware of its position. It is not until you have taken stock of the place that you can recognize the outer moat on the right-hand side of the road.

A PART OF THE MOAT, PLESHEY.

The moat is now almost without water and is overgrown with trees, beech and elm and ash ; and has a very wild appearance. The part around the Keep is steeply embanked and



PLAN TO SHOW POSITION OF PLESHEY BETWEEN DUNMOW AND CHELMSFORD.

there is a brick bridge of one arch connecting the Keep with the entrenched fortress, now only green mounds, the walls having entirely disappeared.

There is water here and there in isolated sections, which I have indicated in the sketch map at the end of this chapter. The houses and cottages that have grown up within these mediæval fortifications had no military use for the moats, and the fact that Pleshey has the unique distinction of being a moated village, sensational as it sounds, is more or less an accident.

The origin of this castle is a matter of conjecture. Some antiquaries have considered it to be of British origin, others of Danish, and some believe it is partly of Saxon workmanship. Possibly it was used and added to by all of these races and the prodigious earthworks is of still more ancient date. Roman bricks have been found, and Thomas Wright in the *History and Topography of Essex* as long ago as 1831 gives this note.

"The site of Pleshey appears to have been occupied by the Romans. A Roman fortification (Gough says) surrounds the village. It begins to the west of the church, which stands just without it and falls into the fosse of the keep of the castle on the west side. The vallum, with a noble fosse, is very perfect in parts of the north-east and west sides, and the four roads which led into the camp may be easily traced. That which enters the west side, running by the church, may be followed by piecemeal almost to Chelmsford, to the west of the Waltham road. By its side have been found many human bones, a bit of iron (an iron bridle-bit), a stone coffin, and a glass urn with bones in it, as also some tesselæ of pavements."

This allusion to Gough (evidently from his *History and*

IN THE MARCONI WIRELESS STATION AT CHELMSFORD

A MESSAGE FROM MARS?

Antiquities of Pleshey, published in 1803, brings me to a wild conjecture of my own, *i.e.* that Pleshey may have been upon a Roman road (one of the lesser roads) between Dunmow and Chelmsford (see map on page 135). The conjecture does not seem so wild in the light of Gough's statement which I have subsequently found.

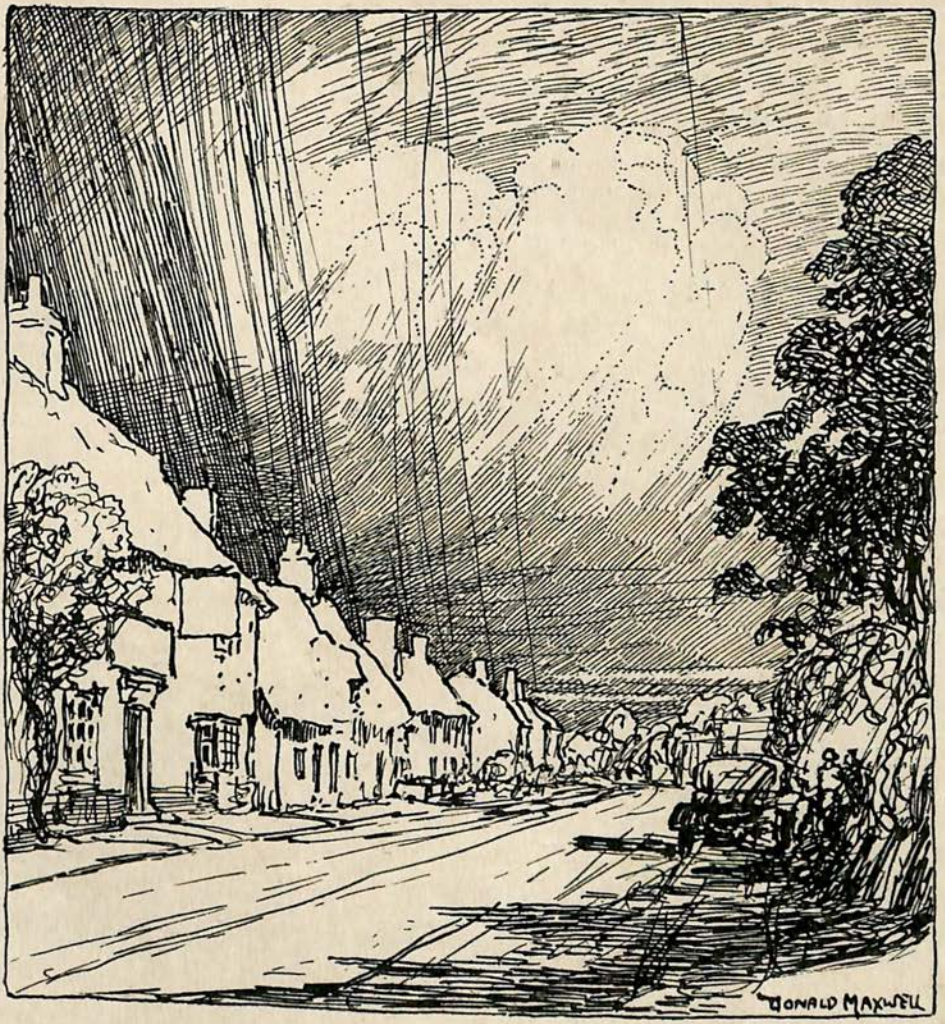
He writes: "The road from Broomfield to Great Chicknal lies for nearly two miles very straight, and the name of a few houses that stand on each side of one part of it, to this day, *Vick Street*, or, as in Chapman's map, *Wick Street*. Street has been always allowed to be a corruption of *stratum*, and *Vick* seems to retain the sound of *Vicus*; so that such a road may naturally be supposed to lead to some ancient station. This road ceases about a mile from Chelmsford, and turns off into that which leads to Margaret Roding. In the fields opposite to *Vick Street*, and in the line to which it points, is an evident ford over the river which now lies only in fields and is disused. The street may be followed from this ford, though, in some places turned a little round, to lead to a farm-house to within a mile of Pleshey, where it is lost in enclosures, but pointed directly to the church, and its ridge may be seen from the keep extending some way into the enclosure."

Again Gough recounts: "About twenty-five years ago, several urns were found in a field about half a mile from the church; and, at Pleshey, Bury Farm, in a field called Stickling, had been discovered a vault, about three yards square, paved with bricks, about nine inches square, and containing, in

niches, several earthen vessels with stoppers (which a countryman, my informant, said were *brass*), and filled with earth and bones. In a field about a quarter of a mile from the church, belonging to the Bury Farm, in the road leading to High Estre, was found, about thirty years ago, a fine glass urn, with some burnt bones in it, which Samuel Tufnell, Esq., showed to the society of antiquaries. I could hear of nothing found there. In the tower of the church are some Roman bricks; and Mr. Morant finds such at the two corners of the chancel of the adjoining church of High Estre."

Leland also records a tradition of the great age of these earthworks long preceding the Norman work which afterwards grew up upon them. A contemporary priest of the college of Pleshey "told me," he writes: "That he had heard of men of knowledge that the toun and place wher the castelle nov standith was of auncient tyme caullid *Tumblestoun*, and that the new name is writen thus, *Castel de Placeto*. It longgid to the Mandevilles; but whither they had it straite after the conquest or no I cannot know for a surety. Ther was a great man caullid de Placetes that maried the heire general of the erle of Warwick, Thomas erle of Bukingham, sunne to Edward the 3 was . . . of this castelle: and built the college there." Also he says: "One tolde me that muche of the walls of Pleshey castle in Estsex is made of erthe."

It seems that the Norman castle, of which hardly a stone remains, was built up on a foundation of immense earthwork and it is probably to this that the allusion is made. This



PLESHEY.

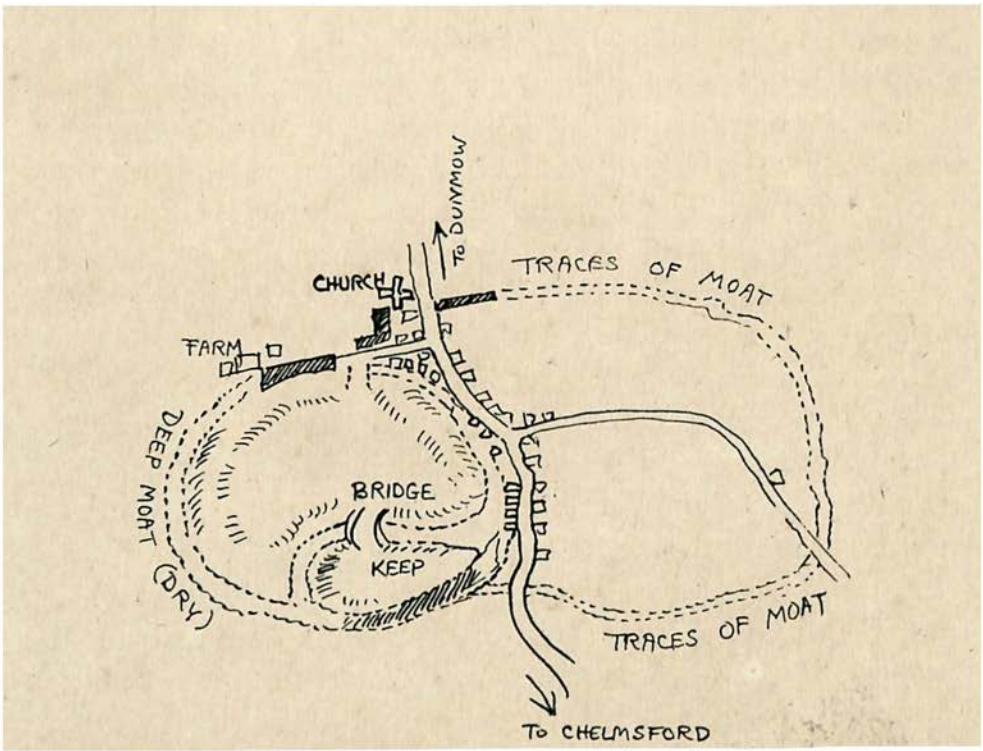
seems to confirm the probability that successive stages of fortification were based upon preceding work. The only trace left now of walls in the two acres of earthworks is a pointed brick arch joining the keep with the main earthwork, and this is of later date than the Norman castle, and seems to be mediæval work.

Writing one hundred and twenty years ago, a description of this site records that: "The walls have now disappeared, but the brick bridge of one lofty pointed arch, which formed the communication between the castle and its keep, still remains." It is, therefore, evident that the removing of the stonework of the castle for purposes of building must have been a long time ago.

A college was founded at Pleshey by Thomas Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, for nine priests. It was plundered by Henry VIII and given to Sir John Gate, one of the gentlemen of his privy chamber. This successor of the nine priests promptly pulled down the chancel to sell the material. He would have pulled down and sold everything, but the good people of Pleshey bought the rest of the property from him, so that they should not be without a church.

The name Pleshey has been "supposed to come from the French word Plaisir," applicable on account of its situation, on elevated ground, with agreeable prospects, especially towards the south, in which direction it is watered by a small stream, and by a brook on the north. It is variously named in records, Pleshynchon, Plesinchon, Plessy, Plishe, Plashe,

Pleysie, Placy, Placeis, Plaisirs, Pleshites, Plecy, Plaisy. So that it would be very difficult for any one to spell this name wrongly—with all these variations from which to choose.



ROUGH SKETCH PLAN OF PLESHEY, SHOWING TRACES OF THE MOAT. THE SHADED PORTIONS CONTAIN WATER.

X

TUMBLESTOUN

"After dyner, the Kynge departed from Haverynge, with a small company, and came to Plasshey about V a clocke; the weder was fayre and hote."

FROISSART.

PLESHEY.

TUMBLESTOUN

OF all the extraordinary names given to Pleshey, the spelling of which has already been noted, there is none so expressive as the traditional name mentioned by the monk to Froissart, a name singularly adapted to emphasize the steep ups and downs and ins and outs of the embanked labyrinth, a town—if it was ever a town—made of earth that giants in play have been turning over and over into a tumbled mass of green ramparts—Tumblestoun. Since numerous large trees have grown up and made miniature woodlands of its dried-up moat, confusion is worse confounded, and it is difficult at

first to visualize a castle at all. The one remaining relic of builder's work is the great brick arch, a pointed one eighteen feet high, gives some idea of the massive nature of the walls that have gone.

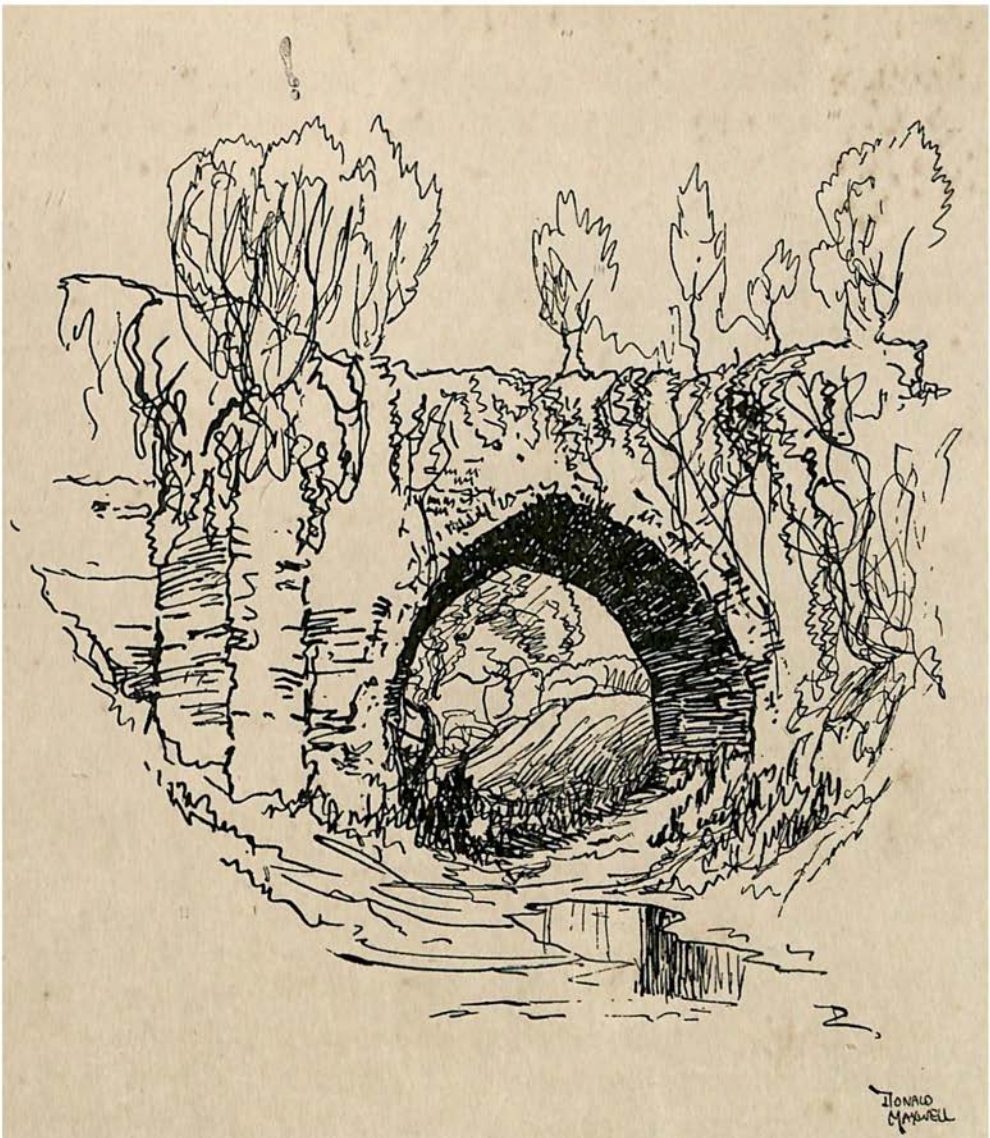
The date of the Norman castle is given as 1180. It became a place of considerable importance as the seat of the High Constables of England until some time after 1400. The Duke of Gloucester, uncle to King Richard the Second, was in residence there when he was treacherously taken to Calais and murdered.

In an old rhyme, *The Mirror of Magistrates*, the following words are spoken by the Duke of Gloucester:

> " For lying at Plashey my selfe to repose
> By reason of sicknesse which helde me full sore,
> The King espying mee apart from those
> With whom I confedered in hand before,
> Thought it not meete to tract the time more,
> But glad to take me at such a vauntage
> Came to salute mee with a friendly visage,
> Who having a band bound to his bent,
> By colour of kindness to visite his game,
> Tooke time to accompliche his cruell intent;
> And in a small vessel downe by the streame.
> Conveyed mee to Calais, out of the realme,
> Where, without process or dome of my peers,
> Not nature, but murder, abridged my yeeres."

The best account, however, of the betraying of the Duke of Gloucester is given by Froissart, fol. ccixxxvii. The King it appears, went from Havering to Pleshey one night and was hospitably received by the Duke.

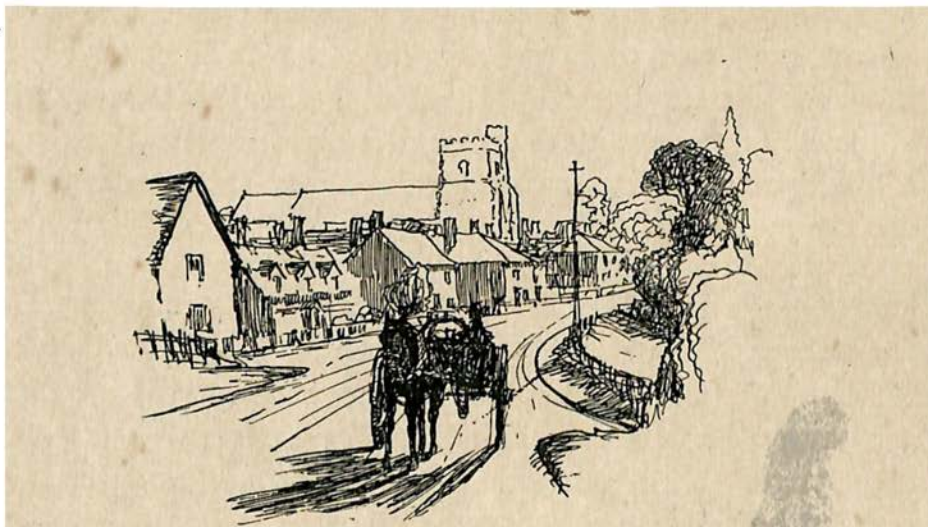
" Then a borde was spredde for the Kynge's supper. The



ALL THAT REMAINS
OF THE CASTLE OF PLESHEY.

Kynge satt not longe, and sayd at his fyrst cominge, 'Faire uncle, cause fyve or sixe horses of yours to be sadylled, for I wyll praye you to ryde with me to London, as to-morrowe, the Londoners wyll be before us. And there wyll be also myne uncles of Lancastre and Yorke, with dyvers other noblemen. For upon the Londoners requestes I wyll be ordered accordying to your counsayle, and commaunde your stewarde to followe you with your trayne to London, where they shall fynde you.' The Duke who thought none yvell, lyghtly agreed to the Kynge. And when the Kynge had supped and rysen, every thynge was redy. The Kynge then toke leave of the duchess and of her children, and lefte on horsebacke, and the duke with hym, accompanyed all onely, but with sevyn servauntes, thre squyers, and foure yeomen, and tooke the waye of Bondelay, to take the playne waye and to eschewe Brendwode and London commen highewaye. So they rode a great payce, and the Kynge talked by the way with his uncle, and he with hym, and so aproched to Stratforde on the ryver of Thames. Then the Kynge came nere to the bushment that he had layde, then he rode from his uncle a great pace, and lefte hym somewhat behynde hym. Than sodaynly the erle-marshall with his bande came galopyng after the duke, and overtoke hym, and saide, 'Sir, I arest you in the Kynge's name!' The duke was abasshed with that worde and sawe well he was betrayed, and began to call loude after the Kynge. I can not tell weder the Kynge herde hym or not, but he turned not; but rode for the rather faster than he dyde before."

There seems to be very little doubt that the Duke of Gloucester was deliberately murdered at Calais. The parliamentary records relate the confessions of John Halle who was hanged for the murder. It seems, however, that as he was valet to the Duke of Norfolk, he was acting under orders when he and two other valets, one from the King and one from the Duke of Aumerle, suffocated their victim. The Duke of Exeter was concerned in the plot against Gloucester and when after the defeat of his partizans at Cirencester he fled and attempted to cross to the continent by ship, he was seized by the country people and taken to Chelmsford. Then for greater security he was confined at Pleshey Castle, and the good people of Pleshey had the satisfaction of getting even with him by cutting off his head.



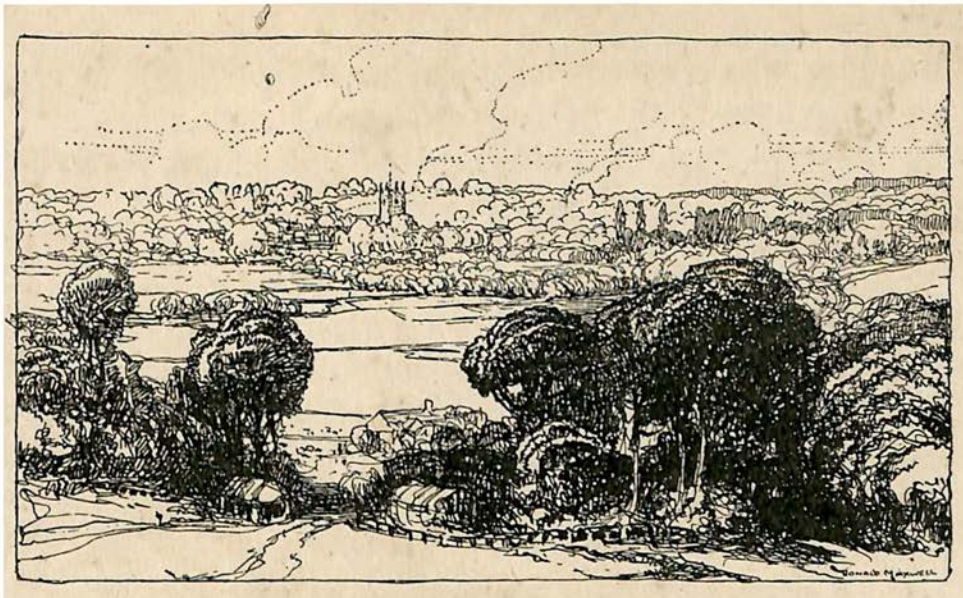
GREAT WALTHAM.

XI

CONSTABLE'S COUNTRY

"I have preserved God Almighty's daylight, which is enjoyed by all mankind, excepting only the lovers of old dirty canvas, perished pictures at a thousand guineas each, cart grease, tar, and snuff of candle."

JOHN CONSTABLE.



THE VALE OF DEDHAM.

CONSTABLE'S COUNTRY

NEXT time you find yourself at Harwich in a yacht you must see the upper Stour—the Stour above tidal waters, where locks have made it a navigable river, at one time as far as Sudbury. The decay of navigation is much to be lamented and some of the upper reaches of the river are almost derelict. The lively scenes of towing horses and brisk commerce no longer belong to the Vale of Dedham, but you can see the ghost of it all, and with a small boat may still enjoy every reach of the "full-fed" river.

This is Constable's Country, and I must be true to the

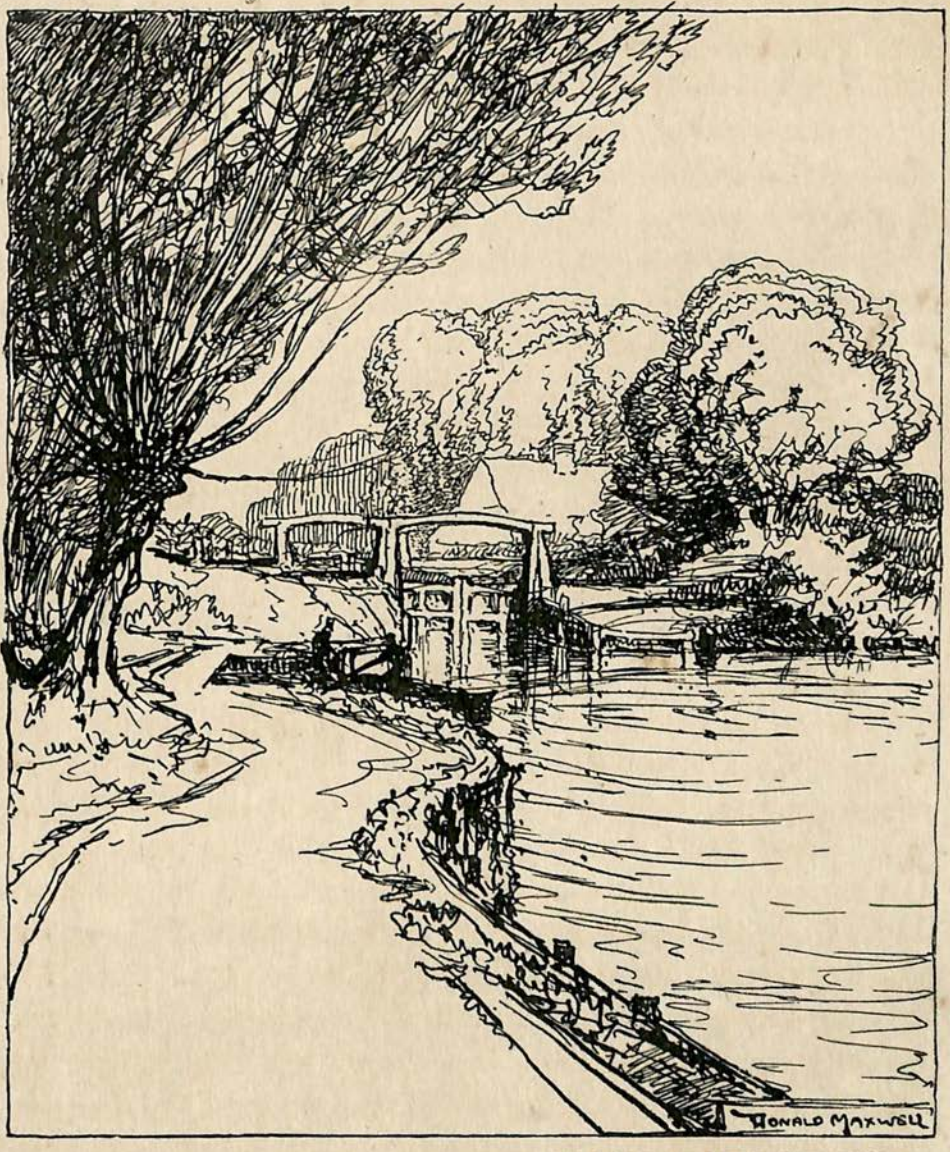
true principles of hero-worship and be your guide philosopher and friend, before the *Penguin* leaves the Stour.

Beyond a few enjoyable days of sailing and exploring between Harwich and Manningtree, I did not think it wise to venture under sail into such narrow waters, so leaving the *Penguin*, toured on foot sketch-book in hand, to discover for myself the delights of that world which Constable loved so well, in defiance of precedent and brown trees.

"I love every stile and stump and lane in the village; as long as I am able to hold a brush, I shall never cease to paint them." Thus writes the painter, and again: "For the last two years I have been running after pictures, and seeking the truth second-hand. I shall return to Bergholt, where I shall endeavour to get a pure and unaffected manner of representing the scenes that may employ me. There is room for a natural painter. The great vice of the day is *bravura*, an attempt to do something beyond the truth."

It is difficult for us now, especially in the midst of so green a mystery of foliage on these banks of the Stour, to remember that Constable's canvasses which are looked upon as so "ordinary" and even old-fashioned and "chocolate boxy" by half the art world of to-day, were in 1825, just a hundred years ago, startling innovations.

The daring of a man who had the effrontery to paint trees bright green, because they were bright green in nature, was looked upon as foreboding a kind of Bolshevism, and such methods would come to no good end. The best people had always painted them brown! It might be very clever, but



THE LOCK AT FLATFORD MILL.

was it art? And besides, they looked this subject up in books and could find no precedent.

It is true that Constable's great contemporary, Turner, had also startled the art world and shaken its complacency, but the fact that Turner was so world-wide in his subject-matter and so "outrageous" in his methods, produced in some ways less effect on current art than the innovations of

Constable. People probably looked upon him as they now look on Bernard Shaw and Chesterton, as beyond any kind of argument and no more to be reasoned with than an April shower or an earthquake.

Constable may be said to have applied the principle of portrait painting to landscape. Turner would probably make a sketch in pencil, with possibly a few tints washed in,

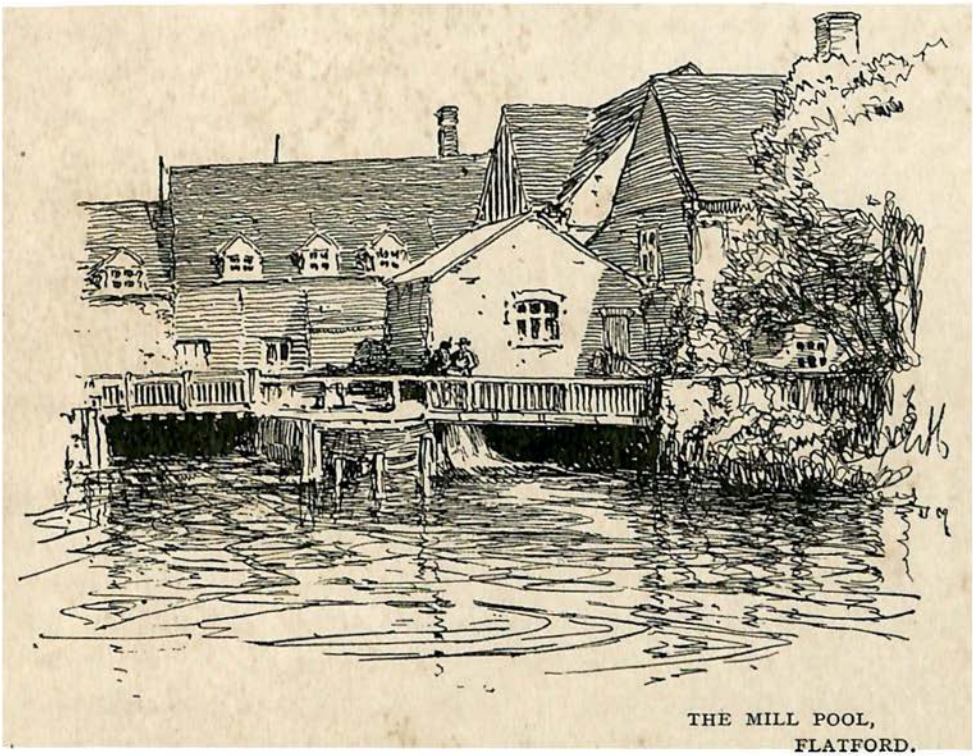
and then work upon a canvas without further reference to the subject. Constable would paint a canvas on the spot. Both were the best methods for each separate aim. Turner produced the vision and showed from the things that are temporal, the things that are eternal. Constable kept to this world: no mystic riders of the apocalypse, no fiery hills for him, mingling their flames with twilight, but the jumping horse upon the banks of the Stour and wind-swept clouds rising from the green-sloped pasture, here by Dedham Church.

Constable was born in the village of East Bergholt in Suffolk, but when he was yet an infant, he was brought to live in the Mill at Flatford; grew up there, and there made himself a painter. His father, a prosperous miller of good yeoman stock, at first intended him for the Church, and then for his own business, but happily the young man found his vocation and all was well.

It is said that the Royal Academy has acquired Flatford Mill as a Constable "memorial"; and local gossip rumours that a summer school of landscape is contemplated. I am not in a position to give the facts, but merely record what I have heard.

There is one lock before Flatford, the lock that divides the tidal estuary from the fresh-water stream. Then, by means of the tow-path we arrive at the famous Mill and seem to be living at once in pictureland. I use the word *picture* in its old-fashioned sense. I do not know whether any enterprising film merchant has improved upon Constable's "Jumping Horse" by staging a version of the subject in

which the horse really jumps—but any absurdity is possible to an enterprising producer. I believe some one has written libretto to Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words to make them more "interesting"—so there is always hope!



THE MILL POOL, FLATFORD.

The sketches that I have made here follow each other in quick succession. The first is a view of the Mill Pool below the lock. The Mill as it appears above is to the right. Then I have shown what in the aforesaid realm of neo-pictures

is a "close-up" of the lock. Each gate has a curious lintel of oak, giving great stability to the gate-posts, but also great trouble to boats with masts. The effect of these structures with a glimpse of the bridge beyond, gives some element of decorative feeling reminiscent of Japan—or so it seems to me.

Crossing the bridge, and passing by the Mill which is now on the right of the roadway, the explorer will find himself looking over a gate and wondering as I did, if he has not been there before. I knew, as far as I was concerned, that I certainly had not. The reason, however, is not far to seek. There *is* something familiar about the view. It is the subject-matter of Constable's "Valley Farm," but it is "the other way round."

The painter took his picture pretty literally from this as his model, but he was across the water on the right-hand side of my sketch on page 163.

The house is not inhabited and is in a state of ruinous decay. It is known locally as Willie Lott's House. The only thing I could find out about Willie Lott is that he never slept away from his house during his whole lifetime—a curious bid for fame, but one which has apparently made as great an impression on the minds of the good people of the valley as the opposite ideal of Queen Elizabeth, who could never have slept in the same house twice, if half the tales of her travels are true.

Continuing along the river bank, we come to Dedham—another Constable subject being Dedham mill and lock, but the mill has been twice re-built since Constable's time. Now

FLATFORD MILL LOCK

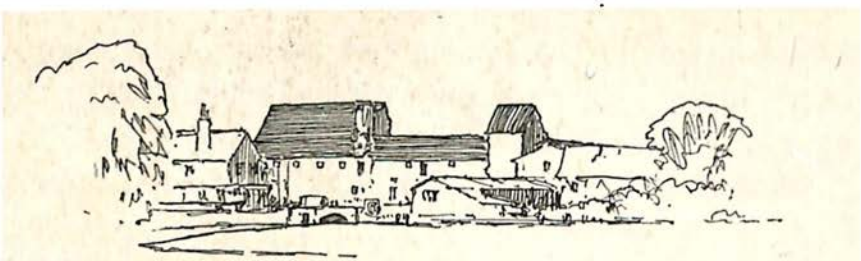
nothing more than a large village, once a prosperous town noted for its woollen manufactures, Dedham still speaks of the dignity of its flourishing past.

Manningtree was the abode of Matthew Hopkins, the notorious seventeenth-century "witch-finder," who is mentioned in Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*. Hopkins began his nefarious career by the discovery of "Seven humble witches at Manningtree." So great was the prevailing ignorance of the times that he was actually commissioned by Parliament in 1644 to seek out witches, and was paid a guinea for every one he discovered. His method was to go to some inoffensive old woman who could not defend herself and torture her till she "confessed" to being a witch. Hopkins then pocketed his fee and went to find other victims, which he did to the number of several hundreds. The method of "proving" witchcraft in those days was brutally simple. The toes and thumbs of the victims were tied together and they were thrown into a pond. If they sank they were innocent (though drowned), but if they floated it was a sure sign of witchcraft, and they were burned alive.

Eventually some enlightened person thought of trying this experiment on the blood-thirsty Hopkins himself. He floated and so was burned alive, a fate which he thoroughly deserved!

The cattle fair at Manningtree was famous in Shakespeare's day, who makes Prince Hal call Falstaff: "That roasted Manningtree ox with the pudding in his belly."

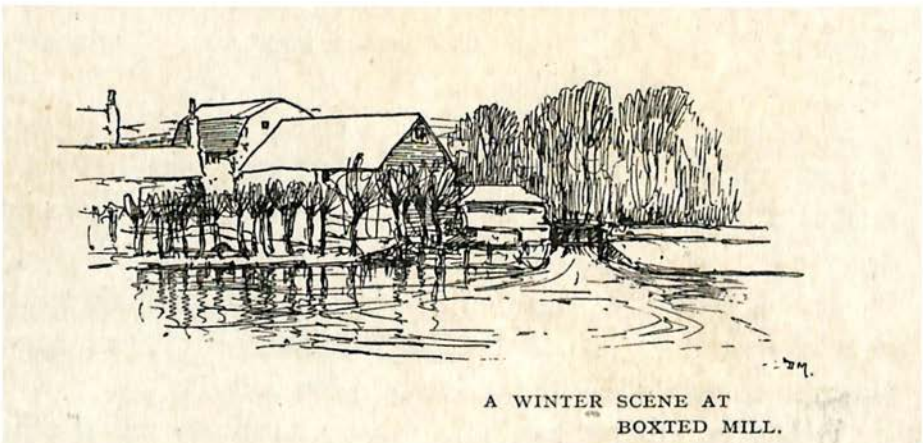
It is remembered perhaps, more vividly by naval officers



A WATER-MILL NEAR BURES.

and men, as a place where they have spent interminable hours waiting for trains in an extremely exposed position. If there is any wind around, it is sure to be loafing about Manningtree station—like everybody else.

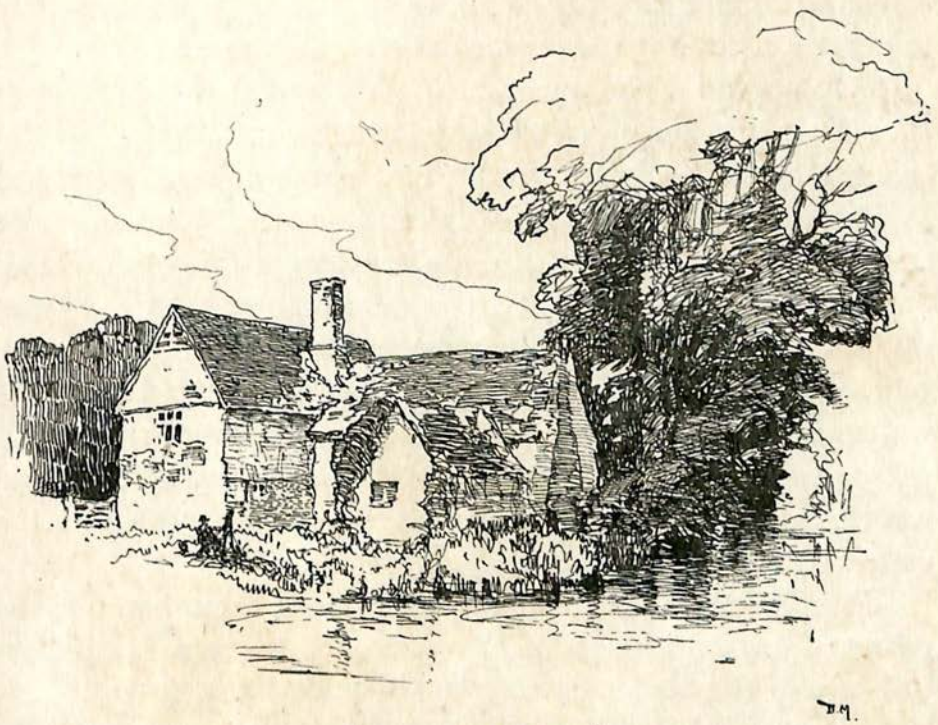
Manningtree was of much greater importance before the decline of the canal traffic, for it formed with Mistley the junction between the sea-borne traffic and the barge-traffic from inland parts. In 1706, the River Stour was made navigable by means of locks as far as Sudbury. I find a reference



A WINTER SCENE AT
BOXTED MILL.

to Manningtree in a work dated just a hundred years ago as follows :

"The inhabitants, in conjunction with Mistley, carry on a



WILLIE LOT'S HOUSE—
THE "MODEL" FOR CONSTABLE'S *VALLEY FARM*.

considerable trade in the importation of deals, corn, coals, iron and fish ; and the malting business is extensively practised. The market is on Thursday, for corn and cattle, and there is a fair on Thursday in Whitsun-week."

The question of the decline of canal traffic is a vexed one. Periodically people write to the papers advocating the resuscitation of the canals of England. The villains of the piece are invariably the railways who have bought up sections of the canals to kill them. In some cases this may be true, but in general I think it is a somewhat reckless charge.

It is urged by the pro-railway partisans that the truth of the case is that the canal interests, which were strong, like the coach interests, saw a powerful rival in the new railways and fought them tooth and nail, lodging every objection they could think of against them, and making a very formidable opposition. To counter this the railways sometimes bought up the canal to stop its obstructionist tactics. In other cases, as in the case of the Rochester-Gravesend Canal, the waterway was not a paying concern, and was not much patronized. In this instance, the railway bought it up and ran their trains through the canal tunnel, having filled up the waterway.

Shortly before the great changes, which the advent of the railways brought to rural England, there were ambitious schemes in the air for making canal traffic more general.

In Farley's *Weald of Kent*, there is given a map showing the projected canals in that part of the world, and they are surprisingly enterprising and numerous. One was to link the Medway with the Channel and the Hythe military canal. The money, I believe, was actually voted by Parliament, but this scheme came to nothing. I cannot think that the foreshadowing of the radical changes in transport which the

DEDHAM GUN HILL

railways would bring had anything to do with this abandonment.

The people of those days were not prophets, and as a matter of fact, they were inclined to ridicule the new transport when it came. One doctor wrote to the *Times* proving without any shadow of doubt that if a man were to travel through the air at the rate of thirty miles an hour, death would inevitably ensue through suffocation!

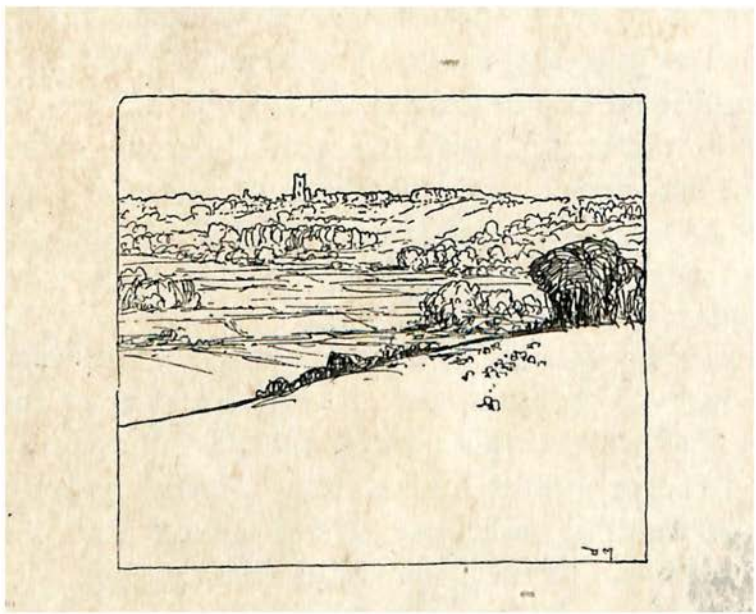
Looking back now, it is noticeable that their schemes were abandoned and the canals declined in importance during the two decades that preceded the introduction of railways, but I do not think the connection is more than a remarkable coincidence.

I forgot to mention just now that Willie Lot's house (sketched on page 163) is also the "scene" of *The Hay Wain*, that sensational bit of Constable's at the Paris Salon, in 1824. It was the picture that made the painter, for the great notice taken of this work brought him into comparative prosperity. It must be remembered, although it is difficult now to realize it, that landscape painting in Constable's time was considered a very inferior art.

Historical paintings, dreadful examples of which cast a gloom over our galleries, were in vogue and after that portraiture. When Constable called upon the President of the Royal Academy, after his election to that body, he was reminded that he ought to consider himself very lucky, as several historical painters were on the waiting list.

It was often said by Constable that he owed a great deal

of inspiration to his watching the sky as a miller. He writes: "The *natural history*, if the expression may be used, of the skies, which are so particularly marked in the hail squalls at this time of the year, is this: The clouds accumulate in very large masses, and from their loftiness seem to move but slowly; immediately upon these large clouds appear numerous opaque patches, which are only small clouds passing rapidly before them, and consisting of isolated portions detached probably from the larger cloud. These floating much nearer the earth may perhaps fall in with a stronger current of wind, which as well as their comparative lightness causes them to move with greater rapidity; hence they are called by wind-millers and sailors *messengers*, and always portend bad weather."

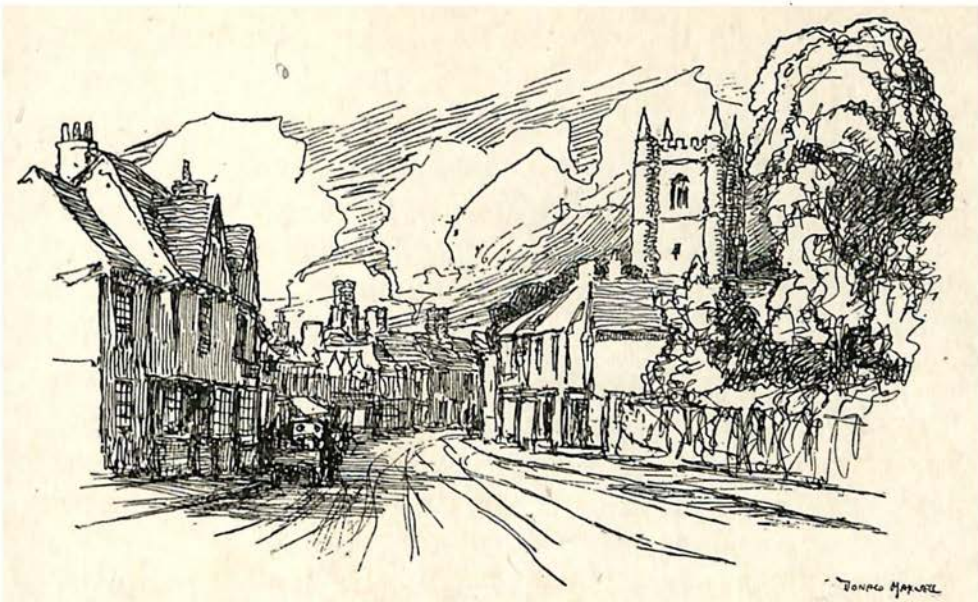


XII

THE WEAVERS OF DEDHAM

"The Parish of Dedham occupies the north-east corner of Lexden Hundred, extending to the river Stour. It lies high, and the soil is of superior quality. The rivulet called Black Brook, which rises in Boxted, passes through it. The name in records is variously written Delham, Dyham, Byham. It contains about two thousand acres of land. As early as the reign of King Richard the Second, the town was famous for the clothing trade, and the bag trade afterwards extended here; but both these branches have become extinct."

THOMAS WRIGHT, 1835.



DEDHAM.

THE WEAVERS OF DEDHAM

THERE is something about Dedham that reminded me of an old Flemish town. It was not the look of the place. That is typically English. It was a suggestion of having been a much busier and more important place than it is to-day. That it should possess this atmosphere is, perhaps, hardly surprising, for the very same reason that led to the decay (in a metaphorical sense) of many an old Belgium town has led to the shrinking of Dedham—the loss of the old woollen industry, which in both cases was the cause of their importance in mediæval times.

Therefore to discover, at the back of the little town, a group of red houses known as "The Flemish Houses" was not surprising. Again, there was nothing Flemish about their appearance, they are the type of old houses to be met with in many old country towns, they earned this name because they were once occupied (some say built, but I think this unlikely) by some weavers from the Low Countries somewhere about the time of Elizabeth.

They are a picturesque group, built round a quadrangle and approached through an archway. Here the weaving of wool was once carried on extensively, and this group affords an interesting illustration of the time when the manufacturer resided "on the premises." The buildings to the west of the Court include the principal rooms of the merchant's habitation, while those to the east were devoted to workshops and looms.

The manufacture of cloth and woollen goods in Dedham is referred to in Norden's account of the place in 1594, and had then been flourishing for many years and was well established. The rise of Dedham to a place of importance was about the reign of Edward III, who encouraged and protected the workers in cloth by laws in their favour. The spinning of wool and flax formed a great part of the occupation of the female population in this part of Essex, especially the younger women, and is said to have given the word "spinster"—which meant an unmarried woman who still kept up her work—to our language.

It is easy to imagine the fine old main street of Dedham as a picture of industrial England of the Middle Ages—a busy

LANGHAM MILL

scene, full of life and colour, especially on market days, for until 1830 the place had a weekly market which was attended by all the country folk for miles round. The "Marlborough Head Hotel," a fine old half-timbered house, was formerly the wool exchange, probably with an "open" ground floor after the fashion of such old buildings.

The woollen trade at Dedham continued to flourish, with its usual ups and downs of extra prosperity and temporary "slumps," until the close of the eighteenth century, when most of the trade flowed northward in the wake of the then "new-fangled" machines, which were soon practically to oust hand-weaving for ever, anyhow from East Anglia. It is interesting to note that "Dedham worsted," though no longer made here, is still a trade name for a certain class of material.

The history of Dedham in remoter days is somewhat hazy; it is partly Saxon and partly Danish in origin, though through its proximity to Colchester it has probably Roman associations as well, though practically nothing is known of them.

It is said to have once had a fine old timber Saxon Church, though no account or illustration of it has come down to us. The present church is a stately building and obviously meant for a larger population than Dedham has now. It was built in 1494, at the height of the town's prosperity. The "Gleaner's Bell" is still rung here at harvest time for a fortnight, at 8 a.m. and 7 p.m., to show when gleaning may begin and when it must cease. This old custom is a very rare one and a real relic with bygone rural England.

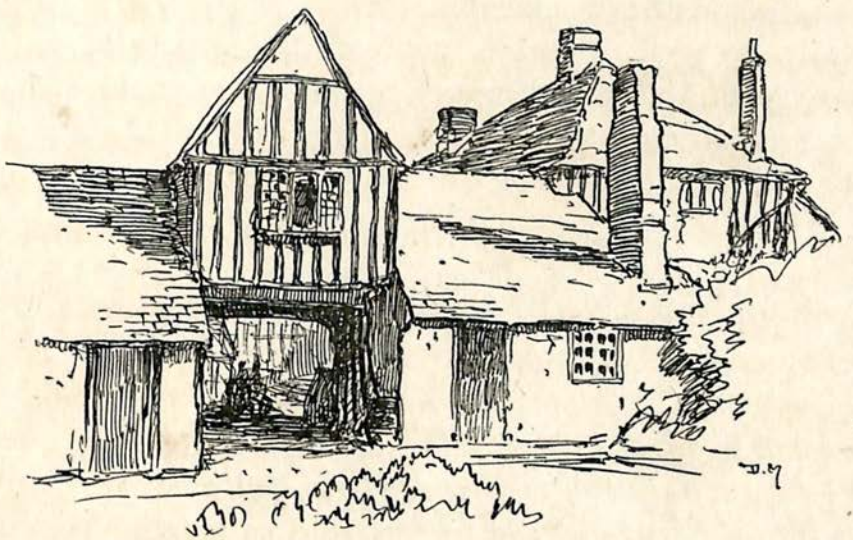
Dedham is in the heart of "Constable's Country," and his

picture "Dedham Mill" is famous. This does not depict the present mill, though the newer building is on exactly the same site as the old one painted by the artist, which itself probably superseded a more ancient mill still. There have been mills at Dedham since its existence, both for corn and for purposes connected with the weaving industry. There is mention in the reign of Richard II of a "fulling mille at Dedeham," though its site is not known. According to one account it was where the corn-mill (the one Constable painted) is now, but this is unlikely, as this mill was known as a corn-mill earlier than this, and it is hardly likely it would have been turned into a fulling-mill and then reverted again to a corn-mill.

One of the most interesting houses in Dedham is "The Old House" (now an hotel). Formerly the Grammar School, it was here that Constable was educated. The school was founded in the middle of the sixteenth century, and the old rules of the establishment stated that each boy must provide for himself "pens, ink, paper and books, as well as candles and a bow and arrow." The records state that while Constable did not especially distinguish himself while a scholar there he excelled in penmanship. With the decline in the trade of the town the necessity for a grammar school became less; the education was too "highbrow" for farm labourers' sons, and the "English School" opposite was started, which apparently taught nothing else but the "Three R's." Even this is now a private house, and a like fate befell a large girls' school in the town; so Dedham, once known through the

Eastern Counties as an educational centre, possesses nothing now save the ordinary village school.

Walpole in his *Complete British Traveller*, written in 1775, has a curious note concerning the people of Dedham.

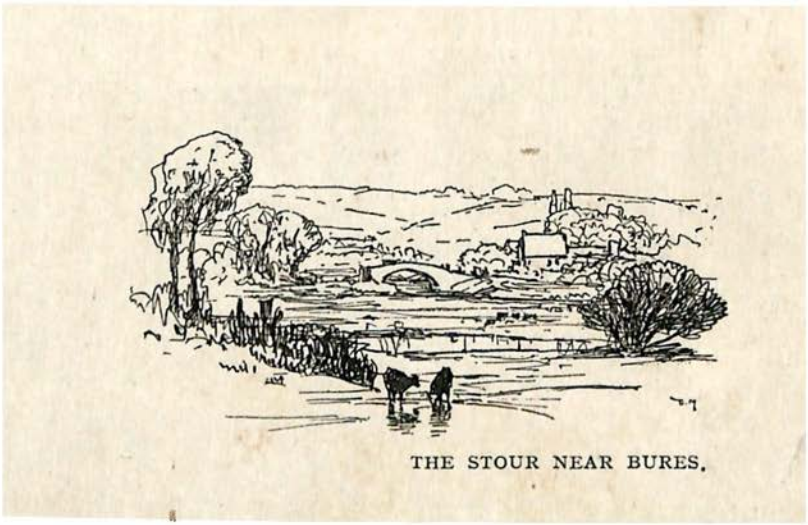


THE OLD "FLEMISH" HOUSES AT DEDHAM.

"During the winter," he says, "the poor people of Dedham, who are employed in the weaving branch, consume such vast quantities of sprats, that they are called Weaver's Beef by the people on the coast." To-day I did not see even an itinerant fishmonger in Dedham!

Dedham dreams of the past. As long ago as 1818 the town had become so shrunk that a traveller writes concerning its state in the following terms, which in this democratic age sound somewhat quaint :

" Here is but one principal street, which, however, contains several good houses and inns. The trade of this town has greatly decayed, but it is now chiefly remarkable for the gentility of its neighbourhood ; many respectable families residing in its vicinity."



THE STOUR NEAR BURES.

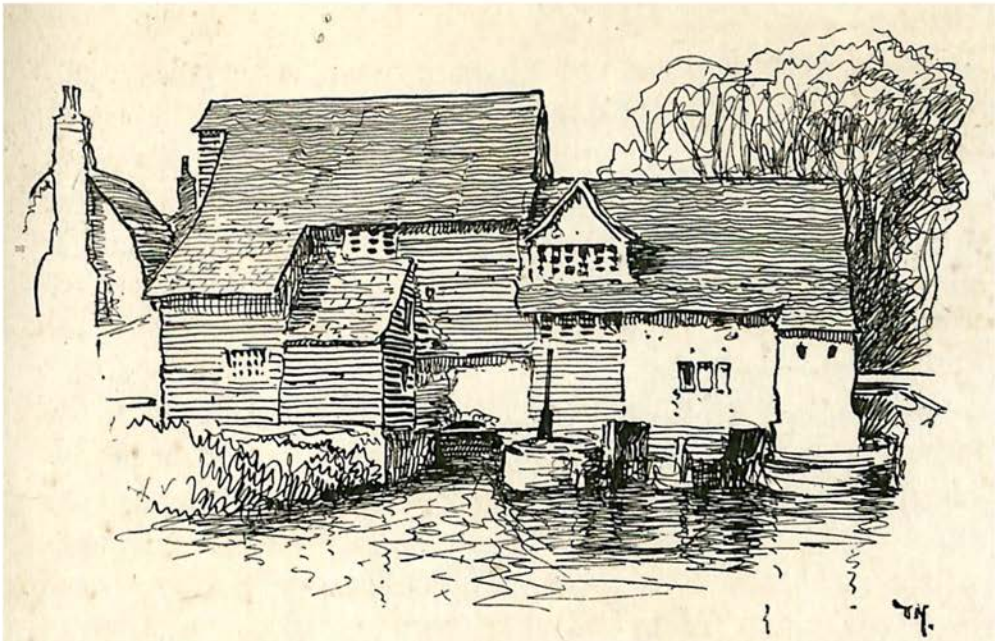
XIII

SOME MILLS AND TOWERS

"That all and everye of the freeholders . . . generallye to putte in and to common at large upon the said common and waste of Tiptree Heath, and of everye parte of the same, with all manner of beastes and catells (except gootes) at their pleasure without nombre."

Order of Council,

HENRY VIII



WATER-MILL AT BRAINTREE.

SOME MILLS AND TOWERS

THE next portion of my sketch-book touring of Essex has very little plan, the distant objective being Layer Marney Tower, but the method of getting there, somewhat similar to Alice's progression "Behind the Looking Glass," when by walking rapidly in the opposite direction to her objective she found herself approaching it. In like manner I wanted to get to Layer Marney Tower, but went on for a start exploring the valley of the Stour towards Sudbury, and thus left Layer Marney further and further behind me.

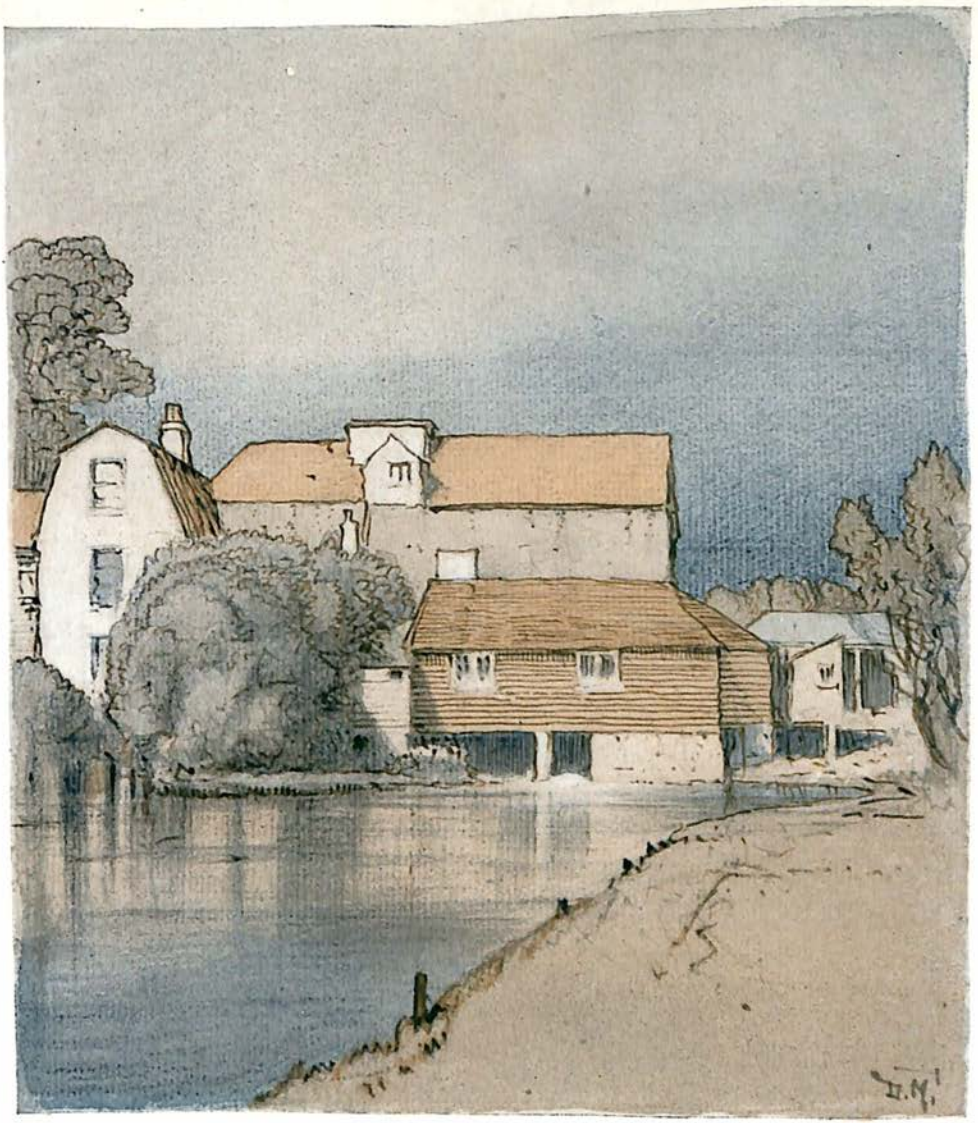
The sketch facing page 165 shows the river just above

Dedham, at the foot of a very pleasant tree-covered grass steep, known as Dedham Gun Hill, and then keeping to the Essex side of the river I came upon Langham Mill, a delightful spot where an old brick bridge crosses the Stour and takes the traveller into Suffolk. Another of these brick bridges further up the valley connects Mount Bures, which is in Essex, to Bures, which is in Suffolk, and a note of this is made at the end of the last chapter.

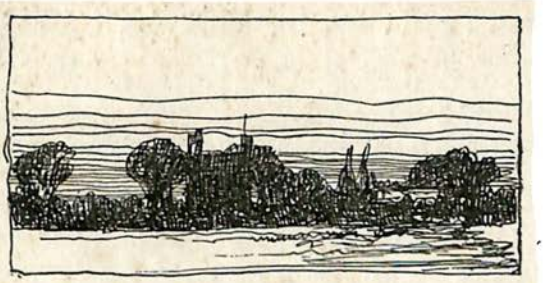
Bures is a picturesque little village which, owing to its situation just on the border line between two counties, is blessed (or cursed!) by being represented in Parliament by three members. The centre of the village stands on a spot where the three constituencies of Colchester, Sudbury, and Saffron Walden meet, and at a recent election the villagers found nine candidates seeking for their votes. To uphold its old-world associations Bures elected three Tories, so it can claim to be the most Conservative in England as well as the best represented in Parliament.

Leaving this region of mills and rich pastures, I struck out for the valley of the Colne over the watershed, and came to Castle Hedingham, one of the most charming and quaint of villages in this part of Essex. Its winding irregular streets are wider than those of the average old town and give the place a look of being larger than it really is. The church here is notable—it is a red-brick building, a rare material for churches to be built with throughout, but it is certainly effective.

The Keep of the Castle rises above the place and dominates



ON THE BLACKWATER : KELVEDON MILL



THE CASTLE, HEDINGHAM.

it. It is very similar to both the White Tower at the Tower of London and Rochester Castle. Once the home of the De Veres, Earls of Oxford, and powerful nobles of mediæval England, great splendour was kept here in bygone times, in one case too much so, in fact, as Walpole states in his *Complete British Traveller*, when he writes: "On one occasion John de Vere, Earl of Oxford, entertained Henry VII in a most sumptuous manner in his castle. At that time there was an act of Parliament prohibiting any person from wearing livery, unless he was a menial servant, and the earl having retained a greater number of people than was allowed by law, all clothed in the richest manner, the King told him on parting that his entertainment had been suitable to his dignity, but that it was improper for him, as a sovereign, to see the statutes of the realm broken in so public a manner, and, therefore, says he, 'My attorney-general must talk with you.'"

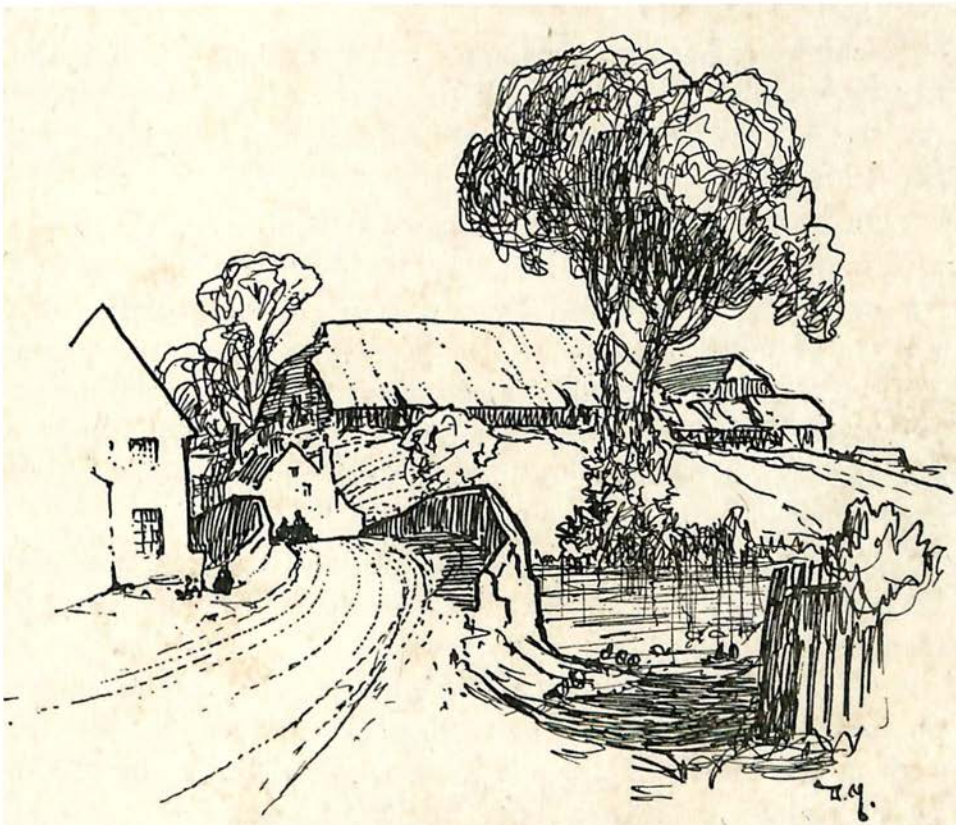
The "talk" with the official in question cost the earl a large sum in fines—a rather poor return, I can't help thinking, on the part of the King for the hospitality shown him on his visit to Hedingham Castle.

From Castle Hedingham I went, by way of the queerly-named Stammers Green, to a place called Rotten End (we

are nearly coming into the Ends of Essex, see next chapter), and so into the valley of the Blackwater, which I propose to follow through Braintree, Coggeshall, and Kelvedon. The entrance to Braintree is heralded by a very quaint old water-mill, which I have sketched in the heading to this chapter, and like Dedham, is a town shrunk from its mediæval dignity, and for the same reason Coggeshall is another of the small Essex towns that was once prosperous through the weaving industry, but has now fallen into a quiet sleepy little place noted for nothing in particular. It is little more than a long irregular street, but in that street is an almost perfect specimen of an old English timbered house, which is worth lingering awhile to see. This fine old place was recently presented to the nation by Mr. Noel Buxton. This house was in possession of the Buxton family for several centuries; then it passed into other hands, to be bought back by Mr. Noel Buxton, to whom we really owe the house in its present condition, for he stripped off many of the ugly modern additions and restored the place to its former appearance.

The house is known as Paycockes House, and this beautiful specimen of Tudor domestic architecture was built about the year 1500 by John Paycocke (or Peacock), a prosperous butcher and grazier of the place. It is not unlike, though on a more handsome scale, I think, Shakespeare's House at Stratford-on-Avon. The carved fascia of Paycocke House is very fine, of a rich and varied design, as is also most of the fine interior carving, and the whole place is furnished in keeping with the Tudor period and has at the back a quiet old-world garden.

A Cistercian abbey was founded here in 1142, the site of which is marked by an old farmhouse, which is said to have some of the remains of the monastic buildings in it. "The



THE BRIDGE AT COGGESHALL.

whole scene," says one account of it, "is very pleasing, with its meadows and trees. The remains of the abbey are scanty, but they afford the earliest instance of mediæval brick which

has yet been noticed in England; and the artist will find in the rich warm tints of this brickwork, stained lichens and contrasted with the neighbouring foliage, some subjects well worthy of his sketch-book."

Numerous Roman coins and some urns have been found at Coggeshall, which point to it as the site of a Roman village on the old road between the fortified camps of Colchester and St. Albans.

On leaving the town on the road to Kelvedon, there is a striking view as we approach the bridge over the stream; for on the rising ground beyond is a colossal barn and a jumble of farm buildings of the most generous proportions. I often imagine that these old weaving and manufacturing towns of the Middle Ages, when they extended over far greater area than they do now, must have shown a good deal of wooden architecture of this description.

The River Blackwater runs on through Kelvedon, a village little more than one long street, with a few straggling cottages clustering round about. The traveller upon the main road, when he is standing on the bridge near the station which spans this river, can see the remains of the old road and the broken brickwork of the old bridge. This bridge is said to be of Roman origin, but the brickwork that is left in the broken irregular arches is probably mediæval or of later date.

In the "Swan Inn" is to be seen some curious wood-carving and panelling, but there is little else to keep the wayfarer. Most of the land round about is given up to the cultivation of pot-herbs; and the large brown patches of Caraway seeds

THE OLD WINDMILL AT TIPTREE

are especially notable. I never knew until now where this seed, which spoils so many otherwise good cakes, came from. It is the only thing I know, however, against the fair name of Kelvedon.

The water-mill on the stream below the village is well worth finding, a delightful group of buildings, set by the brimming waters.

In my circuitous travels during the day I had taken advantage of two lifts, and a third cheery motorist offered to pick me up at Kelvedon. He was on his way to Tiptree, and he dropped me by the wind-mill. By this time the wind had risen considerably and big white clouds were marching across the sky.

Tiptree is now given over to the growing of fruit and the making of jam. Tiptree Heath was once part of the great forest of Essex, but for purposes of crops was of very little value. However, Mr. J. J. Mechi, one of the pioneers of modern scientific agriculture, by means of great labour and land drainage, brought a great deal of it into cultivation. *Kelly's Directory* of 1878 says, concerning this region : " When it came into the possession of Mr. Mechi, was a very poor farm, with a naturally bad soil ; but now, from superior management, yields abundant crops of all sorts. It comprises about 128 acres on which Mr. Mechi expended upwards of £7,000 in drainage, improving, and erecting steam machinery for irrigation, the application of liquid and other purposes of the farm, and in the erection of a handsome modern residence and extensive and well-arranged farm buildings." This was

written forty-seven years ago, and in some ways great progress in farming has been made since. In 1204, King John disafforested Tiptree Heath, and there is on record, a quaint document, quoted below, bearing on the subject.

By an order of Council made in the reign of Henry the Eighth, it was decreed :

" That all and everye of the freeholders, copieholders and inhabitaunts of the townes of Messynge, Lyard Marney, Wygeboroughe, . . . etc. . . . shall have and enjoye to them, theire heires and successors, and assignes, common of pasture in Tiptree Heath, in all and everye the severall wastes thereof ; all the said severall lordes' tenants, as well in their own lordes' soyle, common and wastes, as in the soyle, common, and wastes of all other lordes there, generallye to putte in and to common at large upon the said common and waste of Tiptree Heath, and of everye parte of the same, with all manner of beastes and catells (except gootes), at their pleasure, without nombre, keeping their hogges ringed etc."

After all this elaborate declaration of privileges it seems difficult to see any reason why the people of Tiptree should not keep goats.

When I had finished my sketch at Tiptree I inquired from some workmen the whereabouts of Layer Marney Tower, and found to my surprise that it was quite near. I had forgotten all about my objective and had gone in the opposite direction—and here it was. My sketch facing this page was not made on this occasion, but later, upon an autumn morning

LAYER MARNEY TOWER

when the low sun was just getting up power. It is an amazing place, Layer Marney Tower, and although Essex is particularly rich in these old halls, I do not think a more imposing building can be found in the county.

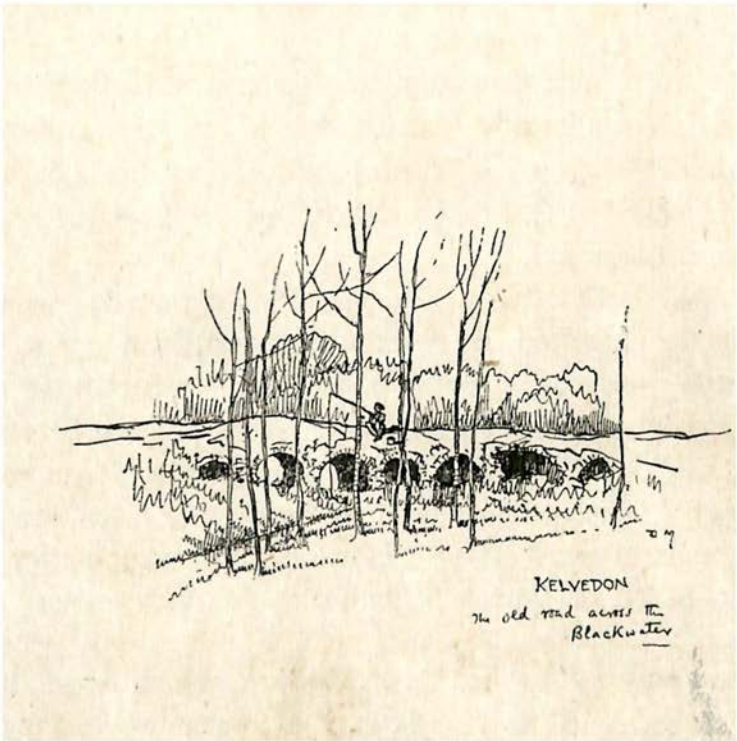
Layer Marney Tower was built by Lord Marney, Captain of the Guard to Henry VIII in 1523 ; though the owner never lived to see his mansion completed beyond the great tower, and a portion of one wing.

The tower, which was originally intended to be the Gate House to a quadrangle, was erected partly under the supervision of Guolamo da Trevvisi, the King's architect, and is said to be one of the earliest buildings in England to show the Italian influence.

After the death of Lord Marney the tower was neglected and gradually decayed for nearly four hundred years, when other hands repaired it and restored to it something of its former splendour, though the original design of the house was never carried out. Owing to its neglected and incomplete state during her reign, Layer Marney is one of the very few great houses in the county which tradition has not assigned as a sleeping place of Queen Elizabeth—for this reason alone the house is notable !

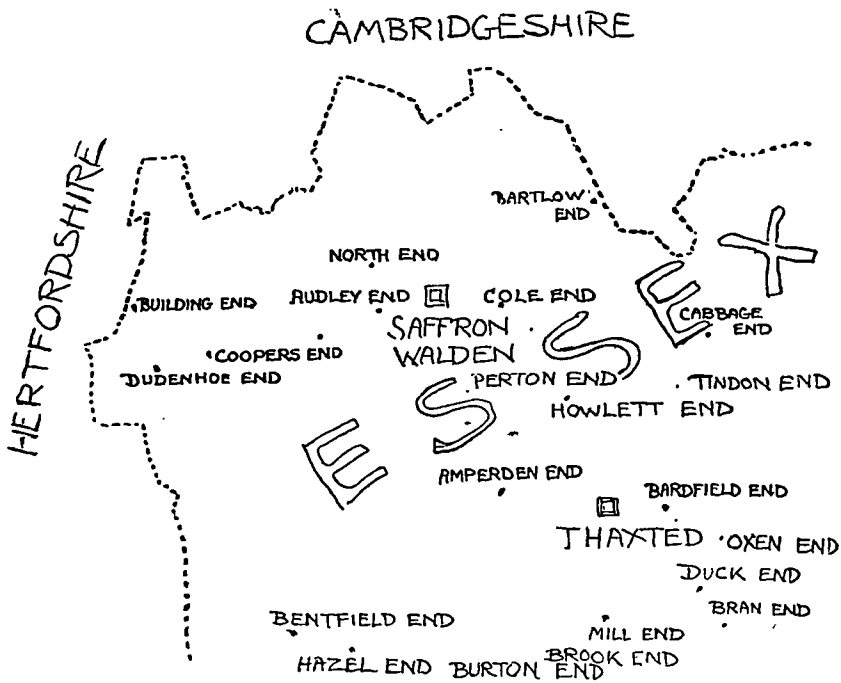
Not far away is the village of Messing, which is one of the many places assigned to the days of a former queen, for it is said that it was here that Boadicea, Queen of the Iceni, made her last stand against the Roman invader. The evidence, however, is very slight and not so convincing as the claims of other Essex places. That the county can claim to be the

scene of the famous battle is, I think, hardly likely to be disputed (though some *do* lay claim to certain parts of Hertfordshire as the site), but in which part of the Thames-side county this grim and bloody battle was fought, will, I am afraid, never likely to be finally settled now.

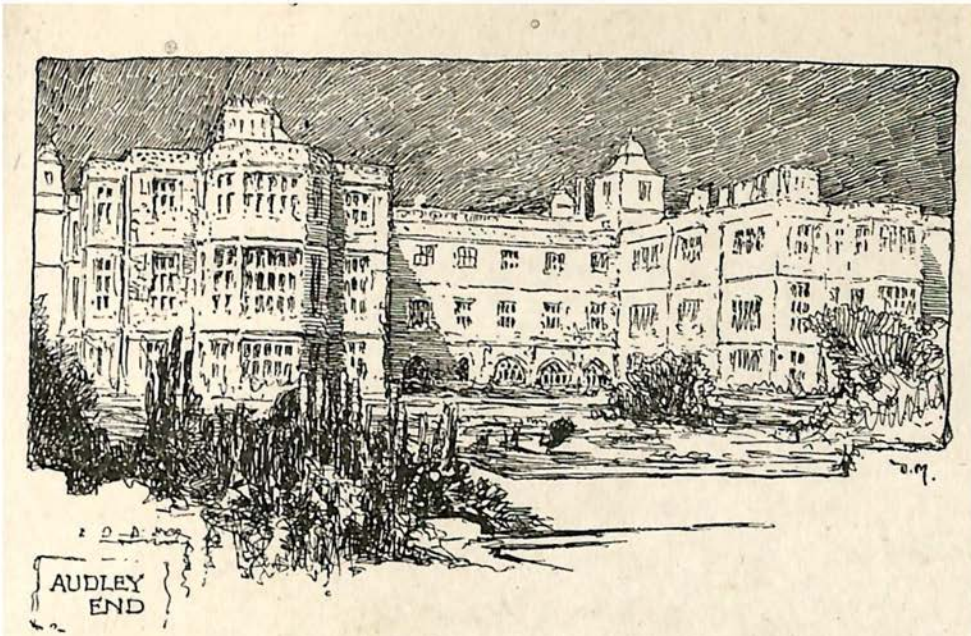


XIV

THE ENDS OF ESSEX



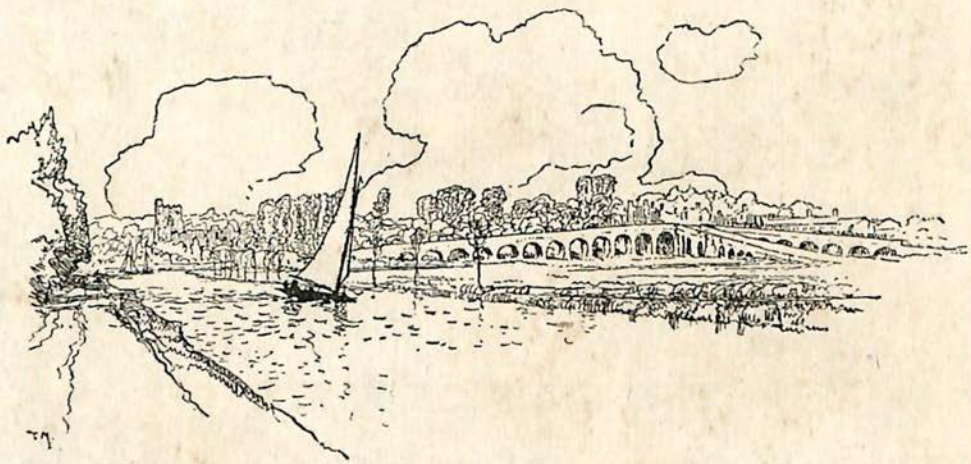
SKETCH MAP OF
THE ENDS OF ESSEX.



THE ENDS OF ESSEX

IN scrutinizing a map of Essex and looking at the region which I had as yet visited least, I was struck by the extraordinary frequency of places named "End." Curious and picturesque the pursuit fascinated me. Cabbage End sounded sordid, and North End commonplace; but Maypole End, Hazel End and Amperden End breathed the spirit of Merrie England. Duck End and Oxen End were homely and Audley End aristocratic. I determined to set forth on a voyage of discovery, or a tour of discovery, to the Ends of Essex. It might have been partly a voyage, for I started by

following the Lee and the Stort along the eastern "frontier" of the county, and have given some account of it in these two sketches. One shows a strange labyrinth of bridges at Broxbourne—which by the way is not in Essex, although it was from the Essex side of the river that I made my sketch—

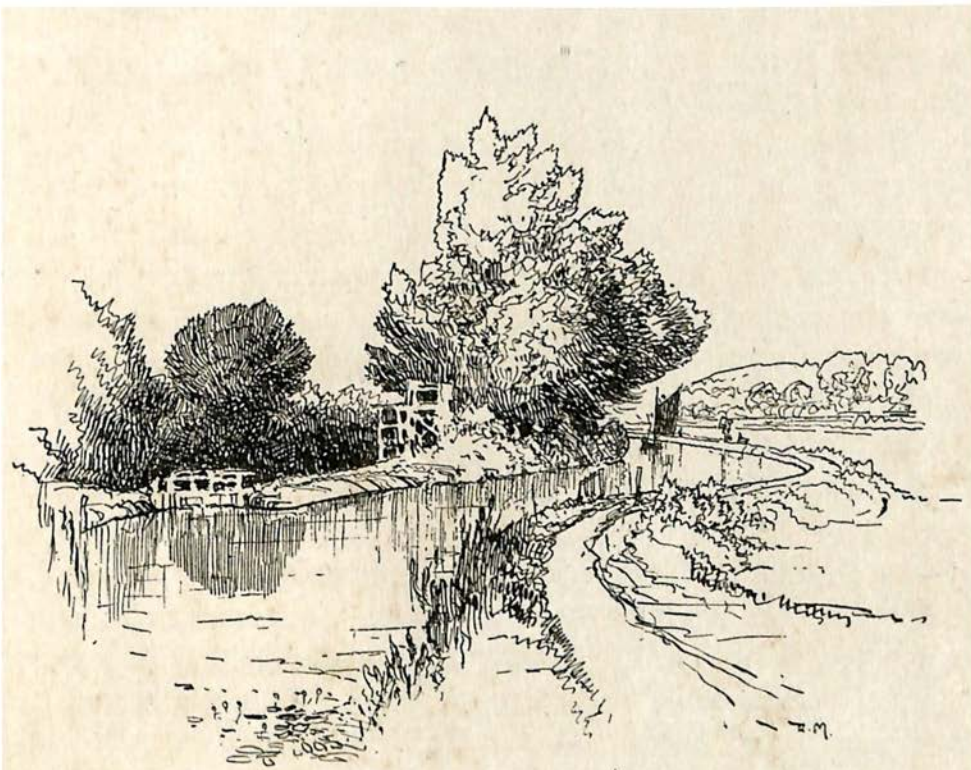


THE STRANGE BRIDGES OF BROXBOURNE.

and the other gives a glimpse of the Stort, where it divides Essex from Hertfordshire.

At last, I arrived at Saffron Walden and delighted in the quaintness of the town that Walter Besant described as the most old-world and unspoiled from within fifty miles of London.

Although the cultivation of Saffron has ceased more than a century ago the plant has left its name in the place, as Fuller remarked in the seventeenth century when he described



ON THE BANKS OF THE STORT.

it as "a fair market-town," which Saffron may seem to have coloured with the name thereof.

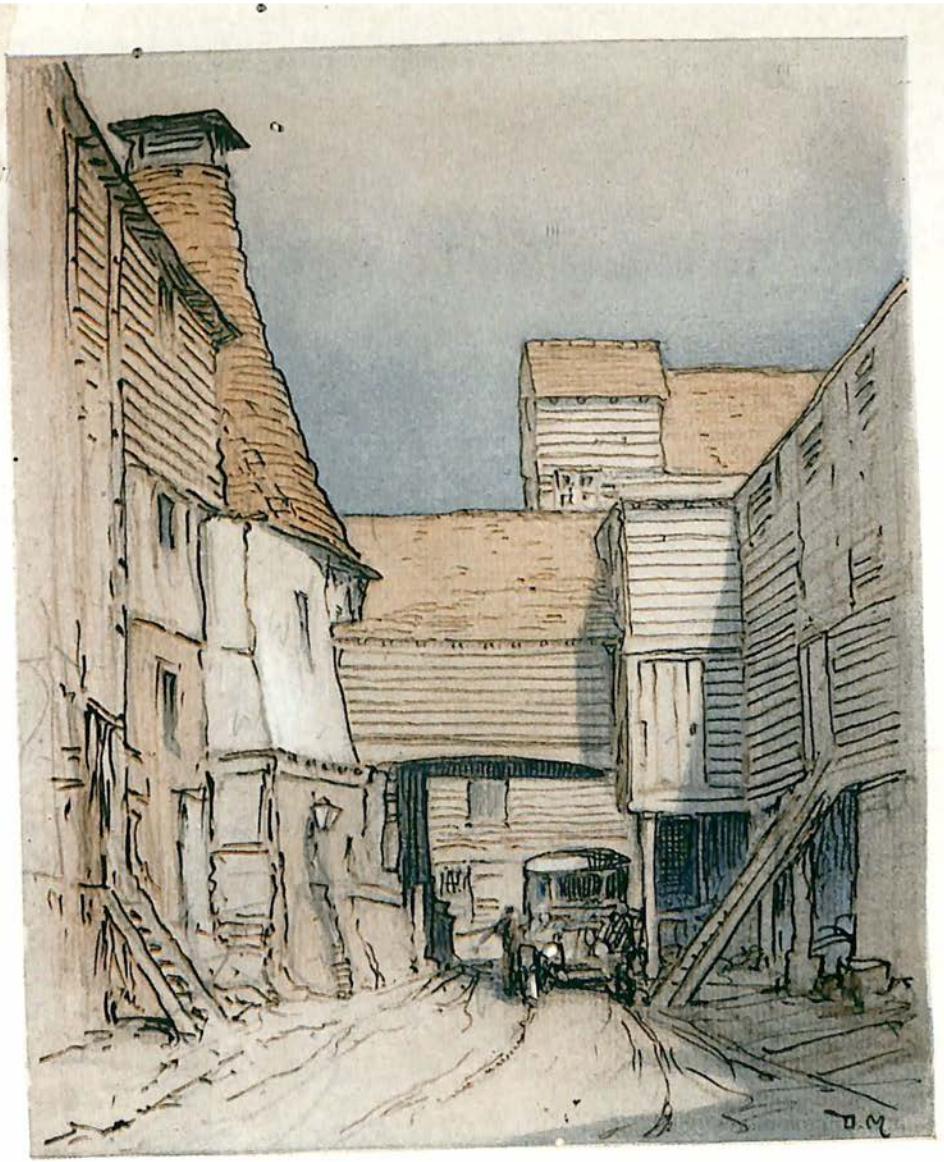
Saffron is first said to have been brought into England in

the reign of Edward III, and to have been introduced at Walden by a Sir Thomas Smijth, a learned man of his day, who was born in the town in 1514. There is evidence, however, that the plant was known here even earlier, for there is a tradition that the first bulb was brought here hidden in a palmer's staff.

Stukely, in 1724, wrote of Saffron Walden: "A narrow tongue of land shoots itself out like a promontory, encompassed with a valley in form of a horseshoe, enclosed by distant and delightful hills. On the bottom of this tongue are seen the ruins of the castle, on the top, the church. The houses are ranged on the side of the hill and in the valley round the church, the base of which, being as high as the buildings, is discerned above the roofs."

This description, making due allowance for the passage of some two hundred years, is not a bad description of the town to-day, which still retains its delightful old-world appearance. There is not much left now of the castle, which was built soon after the Conquest by Geoffry de Mandeville. It has not figured prominently in history, though in mediæval times it was much used, for in 1252, as Matthew Paris tells us, there was a great tournament held here, in which Roger de Leyburn "killed by chance a valiant knight, Ernauld Mounteney."

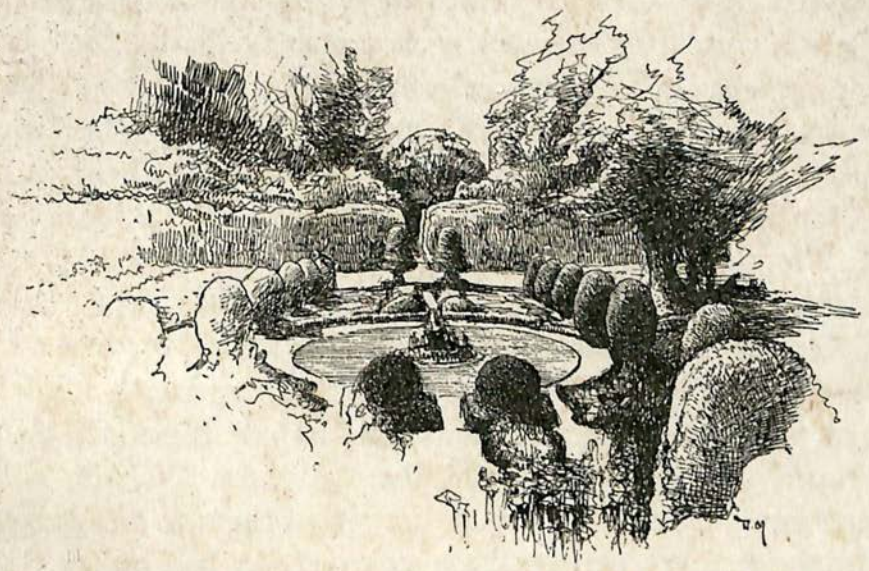
During the Civil Wars, Saffron Walden was chosen as the meeting place of the Parliamentary Commissioners and the Army in 1647. "Our General commanded that all our officers should meete in the great church at Saffron Walden," says an account written by an officer who was present.



AN OLD YARD, SAFFRON WALDEN

Fairfax and Cromwell delivered speeches to the officers, who nearly filled the church. Captain Reynolds, one of the agitators, made a violent scene with Cromwell, and the conference came to nothing."

It is somewhat strange to find so well-stocked a museum



BRIDGE END GARDENS,
SAFFRON WALDEN.

in a country town as the one at Saffron Walden ; the natural history section is especially well arranged.

Not far from Saffron Walden is the mansion of Audley End, one of the finest specimens of Jacobean architecture in the whole of England. Built in 1538 by Lord Audley, it was

of course visited by Queen Elizabeth—that almost goes without saying! It was rebuilt in 1616 in a style described by Evelyn as "a mixt fabric, twixt antiq and modern, and one of the statliest palaces in the kingdom." His fellow diarist, Pepys, was also a frequent visitor; who seems to have been much struck with the cellars, where, he tells us, "we drank most admirable drink, a health to the King. Here I played on my fflageolette, there being a most excellent echo," and again some years later he speaks of a second visit. "We went down to the cellars," he says, "and drank of much good liquors, and here my wife and I did sing to my great content."

Charles II took a fancy to this house and "bought" it, but "forgot" to pay for it. On one occasion Queen Catherine of Braganza and other ladies of the Court visited Walden fair in the disguise of country wenches, or, as an old chronicle puts it: "Did have a frolic to disguise themselves in red petticoats and waistcoats, and so goe to see a faire." However, they rather overdid the "disguise" which, with their "foreign gibberish" soon discovered them to the people, and the courtly masqueraders were nearly mobed before they could escape through the gates of Audley End.

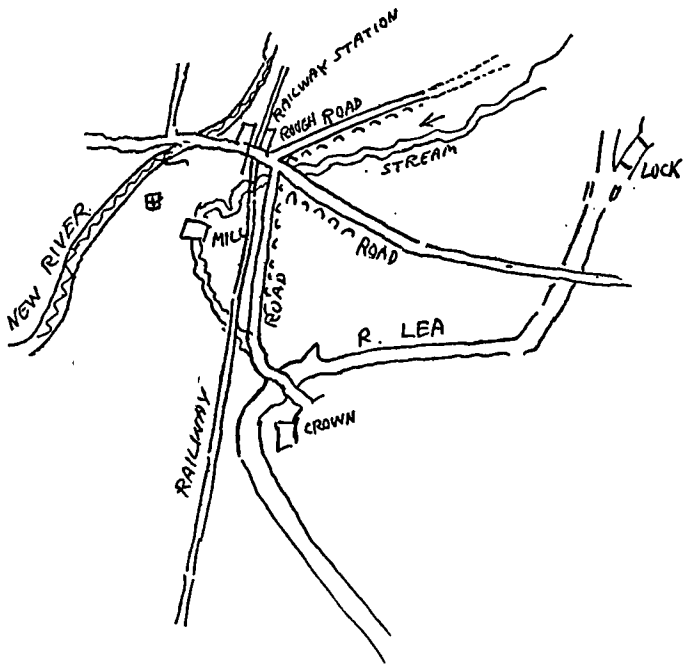
The house has been altered and repaired a good deal since those days, but it still warrants its description as "the statliest house in all ye countre of Essex."

It is interesting to note that here lived the Lord Braybrooke, who first transcribed the shorthand notes of Pepys (in which form he left his diary). It was a notable feat and involved much labour; but it was a task that might have been saved,

HADSTOCK

"THE LAST VILLAGE IN ESSEX"

for Pepys's own key was then lying in the Magdalene College Library at Cambridge, where it still remains.

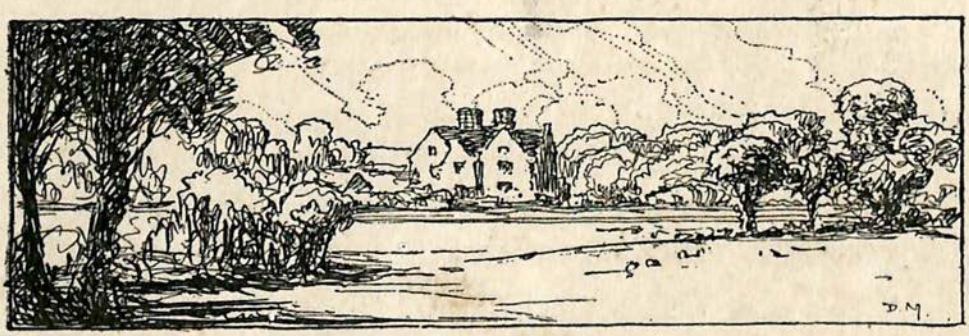


THE BRIDGES OF BROXBOURNE.
(Map to explain drawing on page 190.)

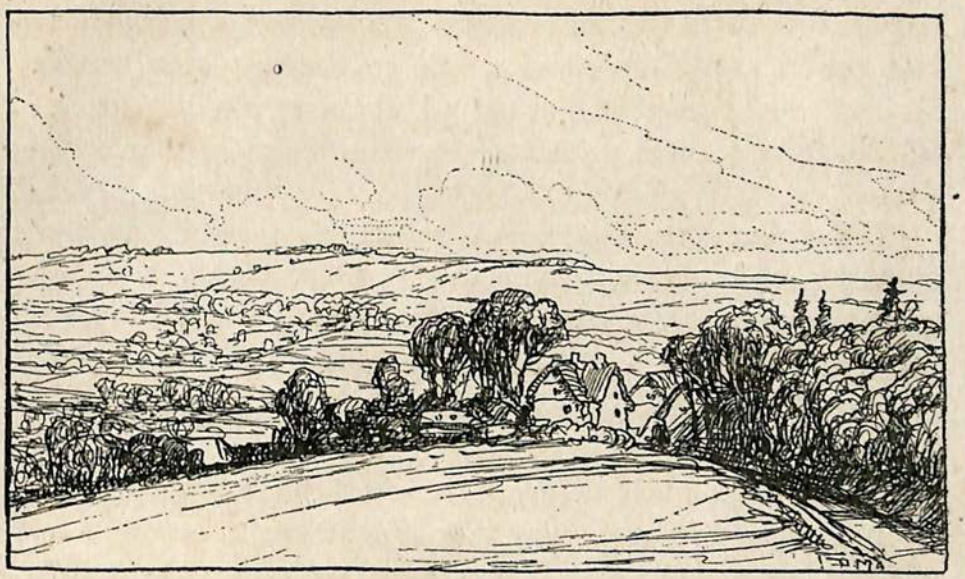
The following note about the cultivation of Saffron is interesting. It is taken from Thomas Wright's *History and Topography of the County of Essex.*

"This plant, which, though now but little used in medicine, was formerly supposed to possess extraordinary medicinal

virtues, is said to have been brought into England, and first grown in Essex and Cambridgeshire in the reign of Edward III. The soil which is considered the best for its growth is a moderately dry mould, such as commonly lies upon chalk. About the beginning of April, it is carefully ploughed, the furrows being drawn much closer together, and deeper, if the soil will allow it, than is done for any kind of corn. In May, the land is well manured with about twenty or thirty loads of good rotten dung per acre, which is carefully spread and then ploughed in. About midsummer it is ploughed the third time, and between every sixteen and a half feet is left a broad furrow, which serves both as a boundary to the several parcels, and for throwing the weeds into, as occasion may require. The plants are usually set in July. From that time till September, or sometimes later, no more labour is required. About the beginning of that month they begin to spire, when the ground is carefully pared with a sharp hoe, and the weeds are raked into the furrows. The flowers appear shortly



LITTLE WALDEN PARK.



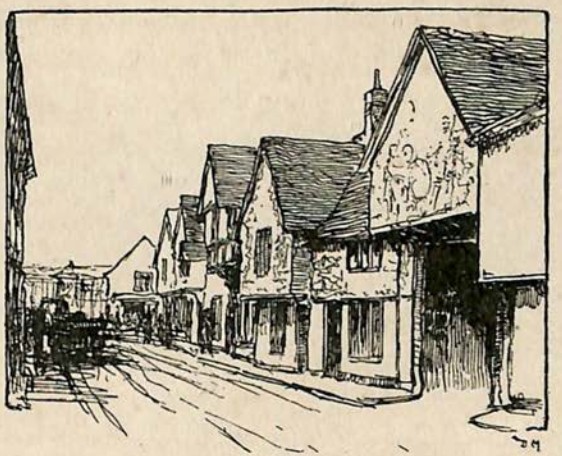
THE APPROACH TO HADSTOCK.

after, and are gathered, when in a proper state, early in the morning. The owners of the saffron fields get together a sufficient number of hands, who pull off the whole flowers, carrying them home in baskets. They then pick out the three yellow chives, which are the middle of the flower, with a considerable proportion of the style or string to which they are attached: the rest of the flower is thrown away. Next morning they return to the field, without regarding whether the weather be wet or dry, and so on daily till the crop is gathered. The chives are dried between sheets of white paper, on a kiln made for the purpose, in which process they are said

to lose four-fifths of there original weight, and the plantation is renewed every three years. So exceedingly rich was the ground when the growth of this plant was given up, that it is said to have wanted no further manure for more than fifteen years."

I must leave the reader to continue my quest of the Ends of Essex for I have not room to give many sketches of these quaint corners of the county. Space, I see, is rapidly giving out and I must at least sketch one of the old courtyards of Saffron Walden, an amazing place that seems once to have been connected with a brewery.

I should like, too, before closing to thank those people, too numerous to name, who have helped me in one way and another in my adventurous travels up and down the county, from the landowner who has allowed me to roam at will over his estates to the cheery motorist who has time and again given me a lift. I have suffered often from the enormous size of my sketch-book, which suggests to the motorist at a distance that he is approaching a sandwich man, and before he has realized that he is in touch with a being who is out to immortalize his county, his car, and possibly himself, he has sped well into the distance. To other people who have written to me—and got no answer! —the warmest of thanks. As these travels with a sketch-book cover more counties the correspondence grows in volume. From Kent, Surrey, and Sussex I have received a whole library of information. I am really grateful for this, and it may be of very great service in further editions



OLD HOUSES,
SAFFRON WALDEN.

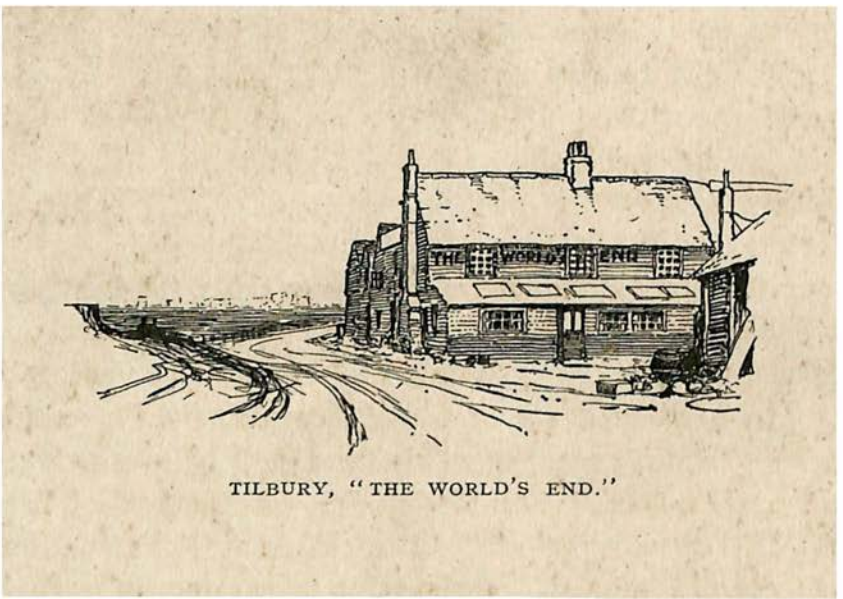
of these books, and the writers will readily understand how impossible it is to write to them at any length in reply.

The "Cross Keys" is an ancient house and a delight to the eye, and the "Sun," with its quaint figures in relief and other plaster decoration, is a fine survival of the town in its busier days. I have made a rough sketch on this page.

Then I must take you out of the town, after visiting the sunny places of Bridge End Gardens, which by the goodwill of Mr. Fry are always accessible, though I believe privately owned, and on the road to Hadstock. On the left we pass a delightful old mansion at "Little Walden Park," a quick note of which I have scribbled on the page opposite, and then where the land rolls up in a gentle swell to a crest we find ourselves looking over into Cambridgeshire, and are marching downhill towards the infant River Cam. A few thatched cottages with sunny-white walls, and we are in the village —the last village in Essex, for at the other end of the straggling street we find ourselves in Cambridgeshire.

And so with great reluctance I must put away my sketch-

book and bring my fragmentary story to a close. In doing so, however, I will give you one more drawing, suitable for this position in the book, a sketch of an inn upon the river bank opposite Gravesend. It is "The World's End."



TILBURY, "THE WORLD'S END."

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